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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX



*Advice from
Dave Ragoza,
Toni Intante
and more!*

INSIGHT

**FIND YOUR
OWN STYLE**

Make your art stand
out from the crowd

BE A BETTER

MANGA ARTIST

How to add energy and
character to your art
with **Asia Ladowska!**



**15 WAYS TO IMPROVE
YOUR CREATURE ART**



INSIDE

**INTRICATE PORTRAITS
IN WATERCOLOURS**

CREATE AN ANIME-
STYLE STREET SCENE

**MARTIN ABEL'S
FANTASY SKETCHES**

EVANGELION ART! THE BRILLIANT ZERONIS CREATES AN HOMAGE TO ASUKA!

Welcome to... NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX



What is the perfect piece of art? Does it exist? We all strive to create the perfect image, but what happens when you can't let go? It's never done, of course. You may find that you spend most of your time on the last 10 per cent of an image.

Wise words, then from Sachin Teng in our interview on page 34: "Not every piece can be your magnum opus. I don't know anyone who hasn't submitted work they wish they could add just one more detail to." So, an image can still be brilliant, even if you don't think it's completed. I thought Sachin's interview was a great read. Take a look for yourselves and let me know your thoughts.

Also, for readers who picked up a copy of this magazine early on... it's your last chance to join us in London for workshops from the world's leading 2D and 3D artists, plus life-drawing sessions and portfolio reviews. At Vertex 2019 on 8 March, the ILM concept art department shares its expertise, Charles Downman from MPC reveals his matte-painting process, Ron Ashtiani from Atomhawk gives advice on getting into the video game industry, and so much more! Tickets start at just £25 for students. Visit www.vertexconf.com for details.

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com

EDITOR'S CHOICE Three of my top picks this month...

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Worldwide community of artists

Our FXPosé gallery is a mainline into the gorgeous work that's created by your fellow artists.

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Creature comforts

Fantastic, characterful artwork from Guille Rancel accompanies his guide to creating creatures.

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To the moon and back

Watch how Moon draws and paints his stunning portrait using watercolours, oils and gouache.

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For digital editions, please turn to page 26



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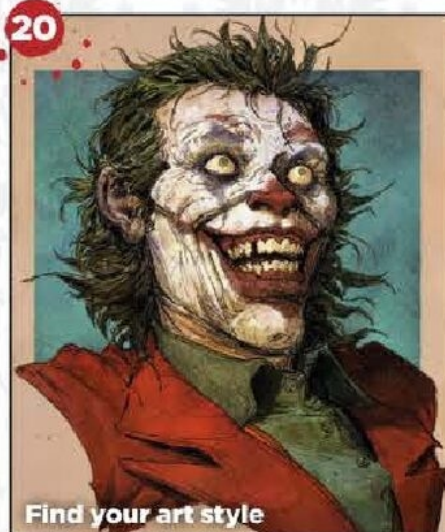
Artist Portfolio

**SACHIN
TENG**



"If you turn down work then you feel like you're turning down money"

Sachin on the work-life balance



Find your art style



**Artist in Residence:
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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

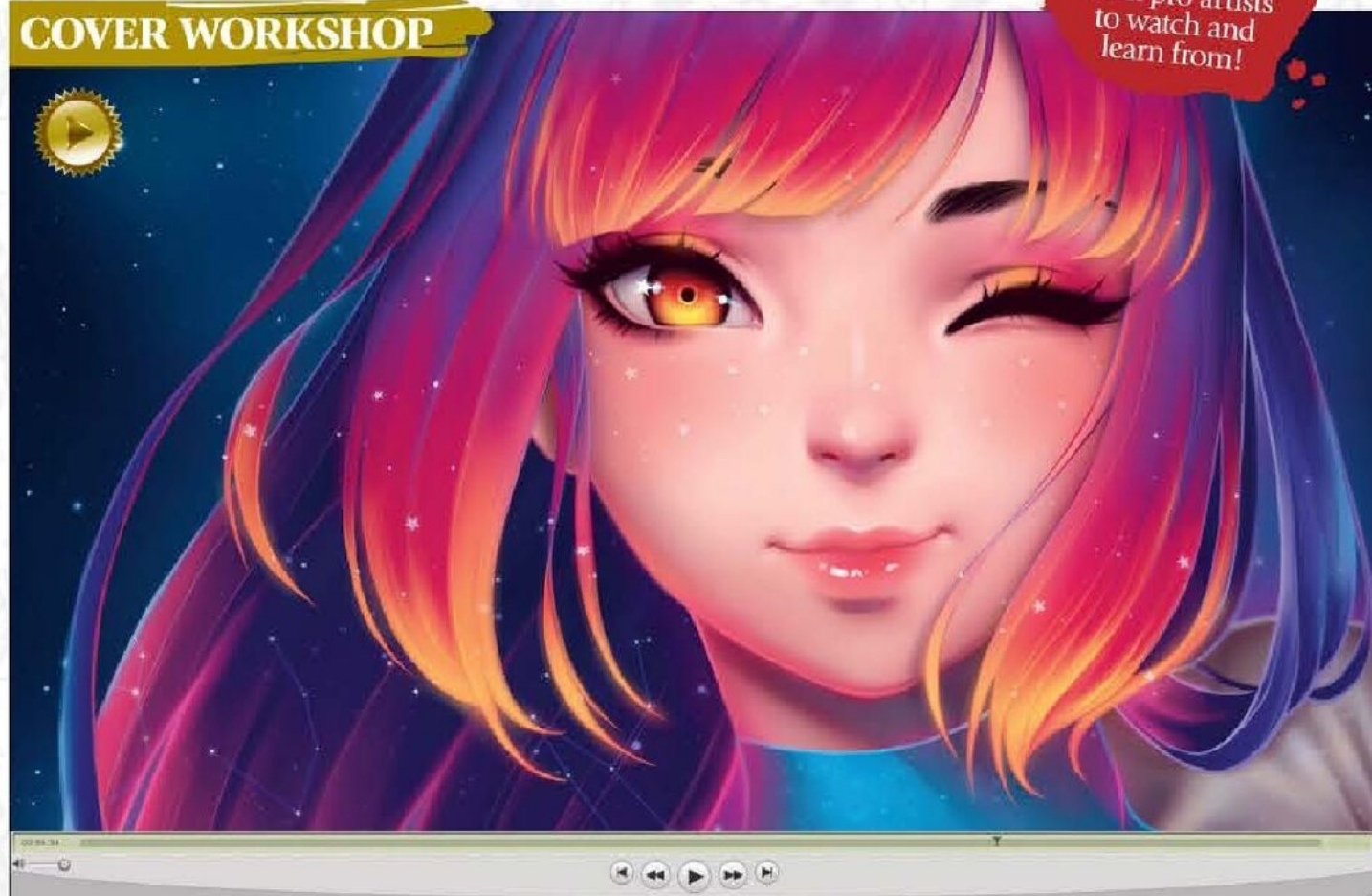
ImagineFX Resources

Getting hold of this issue's videos and custom brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at <https://ifxm.ag/manga172artist>

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of video tutorials
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to watch and
learn from!

COVER WORKSHOP



GET YOUR RESOURCES

You're three steps away from this issue's resource files...

- 1 Go to the website**
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<https://ifxm.ag/manga172artist>
- 2 Find the files you want**
Search through the list of resources to download.
- 3 Download what you need...**
Download the files or watch them via a bespoke YouTube link.

See Asia Ladowska paint manga!

Watch Asia Ladowska's video to see how she painted this cheerful manga character. And in her workshop on page 54 learn how the artist worked closely with ImagineFX on the colour choice.

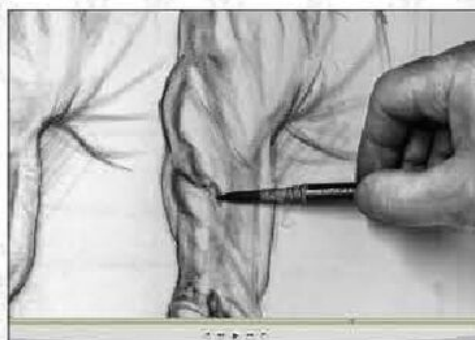


WORKSHOPS



See Zeronis's take on a Neon Genesis Evangelion character

In his video, Paul Kwon reveals how he painted his version of Asuka. More on page 84.



You've got to hand it to Patrick J Jones...

Watch how the artist draws the human hand and arm, then turn to page 76 for more insights.



Mixed media art by Moon

See the artist's portrait workshop on page 106.

Paint an anime-style street

Tan Hui Tian's workshop is on page 68.

PLUS 6 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING....

HARD SQUARE

The texture within this brush enables Tan Hui Tian to generate a hand-painted feeling in her art.

HAIR BRUSH

Cover artist Asia Ladowska reveals that the hard and soft edges of this brush are ideal for drawing a character's hair.

COLOR RANDOMIZER

Tan Hui Tian says this custom brush is useful for introducing random colours at the start of the rendering process.

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FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Roberto Ribeiro Padula

LOCATION: Brazil MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.artstation.com/bonekrishna

Roberto loves to paint imaginary creatures in a realistic manner. On his website you'll find short stories to accompany his paintings.



2



1

1 STRANGE ENVOY

"An envoy from a dimension of diseases, bearing a sack full of gifts for all of us."

2 RIVER PARROT

"A portrait of a small amphibian creature that lives near clean bodies of water. They are harmless and cute."

3 GARY, THE DEVOURER OF CAKES

"A portrait of the oldest and most dreadful of all elder gods. The god responsible for birthdays and ageing, known only as Gary."

3



4



4 PALE STRIDER
"A large creature that wanders the barren lands and salt plains, known for its remarkable resilience and determination."

5 PYGMY BASILISK
"Though shy and small, this thorny reptile is deadly poisonous. Just a little scratch from its spikes, claws or teeth is a guaranteed death sentence."

5



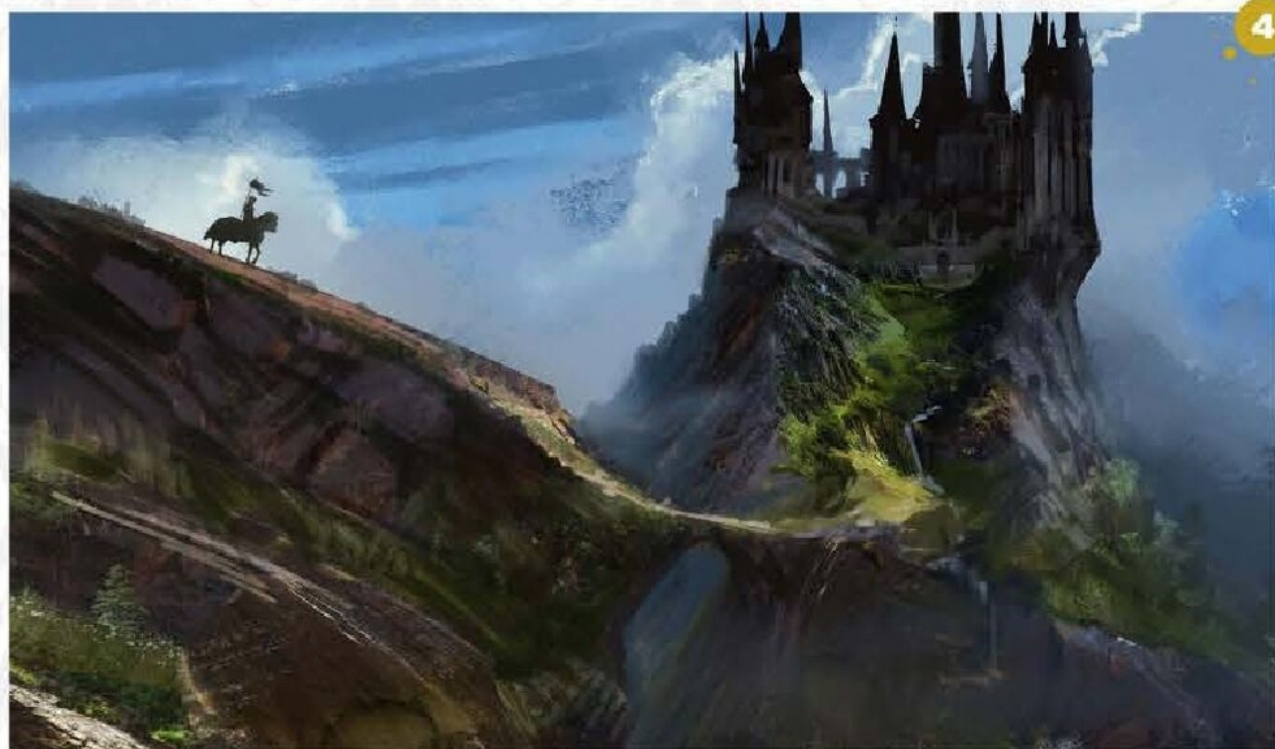


Lino Drieghe

LOCATION: Belgium MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.linodriegheart.com

Belgian illustrator Lino specialises in environment concepts. He splits his time between teaching digital art, working as a freelance artist, and taking care of his two children.





1 COUPLE IN JUNGLE

"Often I like to explore new Photoshop techniques to improve my workflow. This image is an example of that - I used Custom Shapes, the Pattern Stamp tool and photobashing."

2 ZOMBIE BEDROOM

"I had a lot of fun creating this image, which started from a 3D base. Most of the objects seen in the composition I actually found at my home - but thankfully not the zombie!"

3 ZOMBIE CITY

"I like to depict scenes where nature has reclaimed everything. For some people that seems a frightening idea, but I find I get a very peaceful feeling while working on images like this."

4 ALMOST HOME

"This is a result of my nightly experiments when the kids are asleep. It was all done with the Pattern Stamp tool in Photoshop. I created my own patterns to speed things up."



Nicholas Foong

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop, Modo, ZBrush WEB: www.nicholasfoong.com

Nicholas is a concept designer working in the theme park industry. Inspired by the books of Enid Blyton and Roald Dahl, he likes to explore themes of childhood nostalgia and the transition into adulthood in his personal art.

1 CAESAR'S HOME

"This was an ArtCenter class assignment: we had to design and light a set based on an existing movie. My goal was to convey a sense of peace in the apes' community before the humans showed up."

1



2 SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES

"This was based on the Ray Bradbury novel *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. I wanted the carousel to look like it was glowing in a cold, menacing way against the warm backdrop."

2

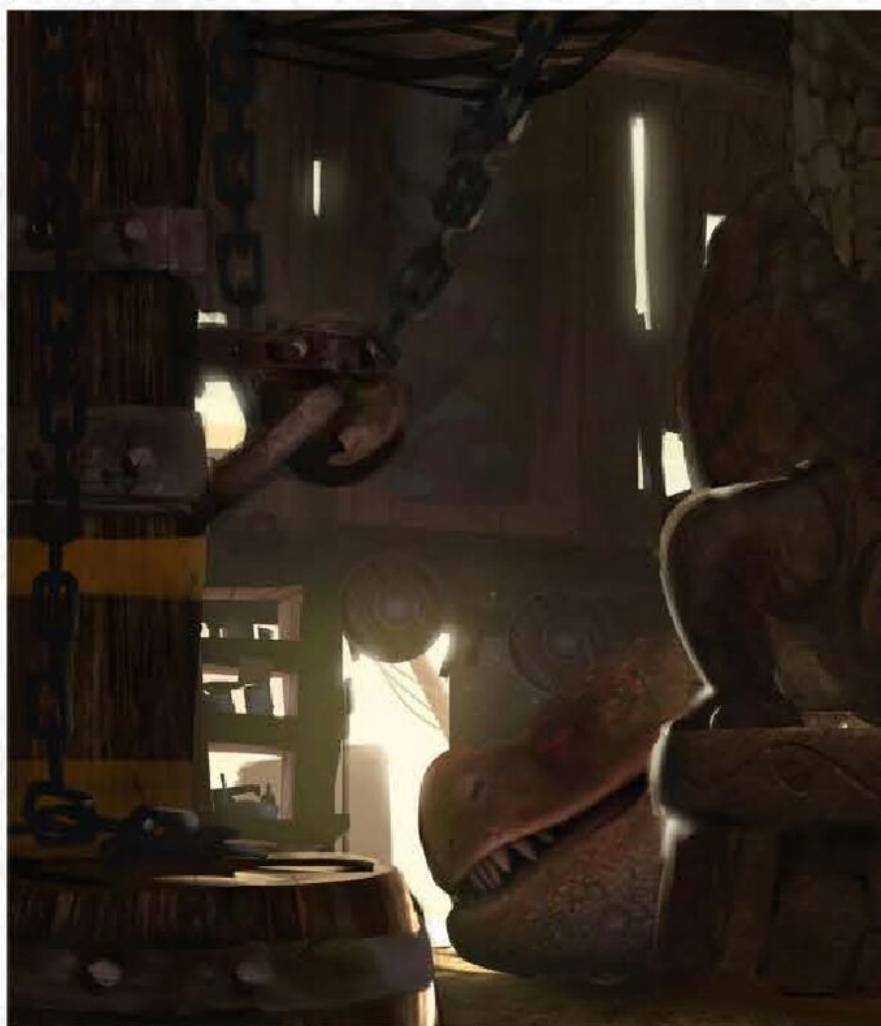


3 INDIGO CHILD

"This was my ArtCenter graduation project. It's a story about a girl who finds herself starring as the lead in a theatrical production in an old puppet theatre."

4 GOBBER'S WORKSHOP

"Fan art for *How to Train Your Dragon*. A visualisation of how Gobber's workshop looks when he no longer needs to forge weapons for fending off dragons."



3



4





Tom McLean

LOCATION: England **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate **WEB:** www.thomasmcleanart.com

"Although architecture enabled me to finally afford an ImagineFX subscription, I've moved on to my true passion: the world of freelance concept art," says Tom. "I'm having a blast!"

1 A WEE BIRDIE

"This was the first piece I was able to do completely in Procreate. I was playing around with fun beards and magic."



2

2 MORNING COFFEE

"In this and my other work I really try to push colour, proportion and shape to find fun, exciting characters."

3

3 WIZARDZ ON THE WESTERN FRONT

"This piece was part of a personal project I'm working on called Wizardz on the Western Front. I started with the title, and that's as far as I've got."

4 DRUM

"A big tough guy who just likes to make a lot of noise. Underneath all that blubber he's sensitive really..."





Stephanie Brown

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.offbeatworlds.com

Freelance illustrator Stephanie has a degree in illustration and has been painting digitally for nearly 15 years. Aside from creating art, she's also a YouTuber, screenwriter and cosplayer.



1 ISOLATION

"Key art painting from my screenplay Nethergate. It shows the main character at her most vulnerable, when she can't take being scared any longer."

2 VOX MACHINA

"Fan art of the characters from the web series Critical Role. This piece won Fan art of the Week on Talks Machina, the show's official commentary programme."

3 GNOME WIZARD

"A portrait commission of a Dungeons & Dragons character, which is actually what a large percentage of my client work consists of."







How to find your art style

Aesthetic sharers Is crafting a style something artists can strive for, or is it a by-product of just having some fun? **Dom Carter** explores how to develop a look

If you were asked to make a list of your favourite artists, chances are you'd be able to explain the small quirks or creative decisions they've made that made an impact on you. You might have even tried to recreate these styles in your own pieces.

But is honing a style – either someone else's or your own – an achievable goal? Or is it counter-intuitive to your development as an artist? The answers depend on how you want to work, and to figure everything out you need to listen to your instincts.

Various factors contribute to the development of a style. For fantasy illustrator **Djamila Knopf**, it can all be



traced back to watching Sailor Moon for the first time. "The minute that intro came on I was completely mesmerised,"

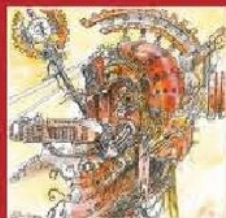
she explains. "To my five year-old self, the colours, the style, the story, the transformation scenes – it was all perfect. From then on, I drew Sailor Moon fan art non-stop and tried to emulate the style."

ART AS ALTERNATE REALITY

Today Djamila describes her work as evoking a "sense of wonder and nostalgia", which sounds like a fitting way of carrying forward her formative anime experience. "I use colours that are far from realistic and so they create a more dream-like, alternate reality."

Freelance illustrator **Toni Infante** had a similar experience upon discovering manga. "Dragon Ball was probably the first one I came across," he says. "Seeing those powerful characters with weird hair really left an ➤➤"





GET MORE FROM VERTEX

Learn how you can get your portfolio reviewed by Game Workshop's pro artists, and see what Adam Dewhirst of leading VFX house DNEG has up his sleeve. **Page 27**



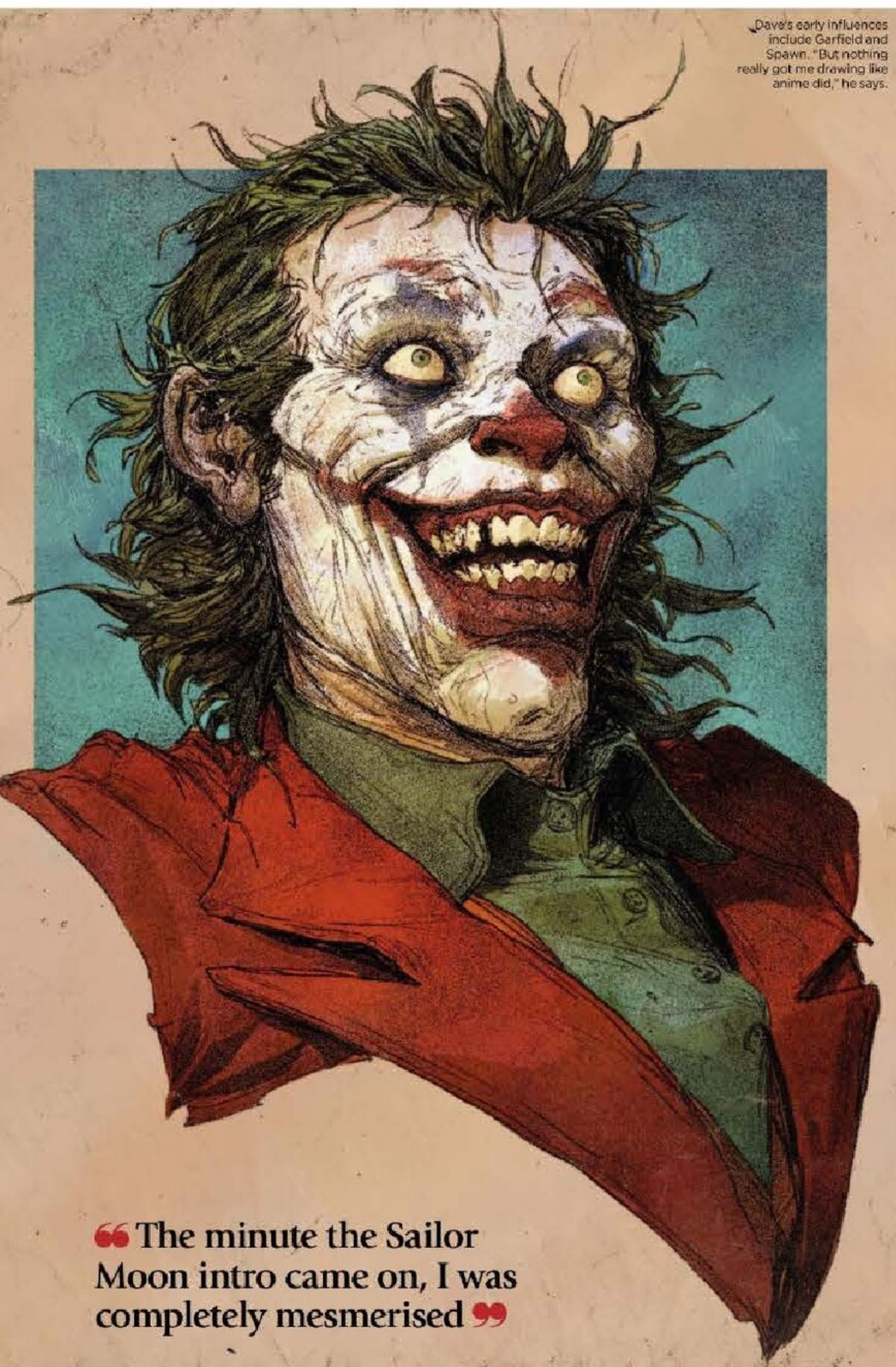
SUPERHERO WORSHIP

Presented with a blank canvas for his studio, Mike Mahle created a love letter to comics and superheroes. You're taking tour bookings – right, Mike? **Page 28**



DROP US A LINE

If you've seen something in the magazine that you want to comment on, or want to talk about inspiring art or artists, get in touch! **Page 33**



Dave's early influences include Garfield and Spawn. "But nothing really got me drawing like anime did," he says.

“The minute the Sailor Moon intro came on, I was completely mesmerised”

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

DAVE RAPOZA

When it comes to style, is it better to be a jack of all trades?

What's your painting style?

I'm not sure I have one set style. In the beginning I wanted to be a realistic painter, but I found that by improving my rendering and lighting I had only made it easier to hide the flaws in my underlying drawings. To combat this, I shifted styles to one that focused on my drawing abilities, which was something I had zero confidence in. Since then I've been trying to challenge myself to address my flaws in more creative ways.

Did this result in false leads?

Not really. I don't think too much about being different or having to have a clear identity. I don't mind wearing my influences on my sleeve. Nobody gets to where they are without having people inspire them so I don't really care too much about developing a style. I just want to be happy doing what I enjoy doing. If that ends up looking unique that's awesome, but if it looks like one of my heroes then I'm always happy to pay homage as well.

Do artists need a distinctive style to land work?

There are no absolutes in the art industry. That being said, if you expect to work for Bungie on Destiny and you apply with a manga portfolio you will likely not get a job. You still need to know your audience when applying for work. But, for you, there are no rules and you never know who will end up seeing the work you put out, and contacting you to do that for them.



Dave is a self-taught illustrator from Boston, MA, with clients including Riot Games and 20th Century Fox.

www.daverapoza.com/bestmade.com

"If I have to describe my style I would say it's a mix of East and West," says Toni. "It has a clear manga influence and borrows a lot from American and European art as well."



“ Seeing those powerful
characters with weird hair
left an impression on me ”



Toni tries new approaches to keep his style fresh. "It's the only way I can become better and avoid making the same mistakes over and over again."



➔ impression on me. I think it's still easy to see the influence of Dragon Ball writer and illustrator Akira Toriyama on my style, which includes plenty of dynamic shapes and angles."

CAREER OPTIONS

So honouring your influences can lead to your style, but can your style lead to work? According to Djamila, a signature style can both open and close doors to potential projects. "If you're someone who enjoys being a chameleon, all power to you! It can actually be great when you're working

on different productions that require you to switch styles," she says.

"But having a style that people recognise has its advantages, too. Because you're being hired for bringing your unique voice to a project. For me, the signature style has been my way to go. It makes me so happy when people tell me that they saw an illustration of mine and recognised the style. When I was trying to work like a Magic: The Gathering artist, I never received comments like that because all I did was try to mimic other people's styles."

Dave spent entire summers as a kid trying to nail a manga style: "I'll still revisit all that old stuff today for inspiration, a big one lately being Vampire Hunter D: Bloodlust."

For illustrator, concept and comic artist **Dave Rapoza**, it's best not to overthink your approach and your position in the industry when it comes to style. "You'll always be looking to see what



everyone else is doing to stand out and end up comparing your work to theirs, which can be very unhealthy for your development," he says.

"When you're happy doing what you do, people can definitely tell. And if your style is also all your own through a melting pot of all your



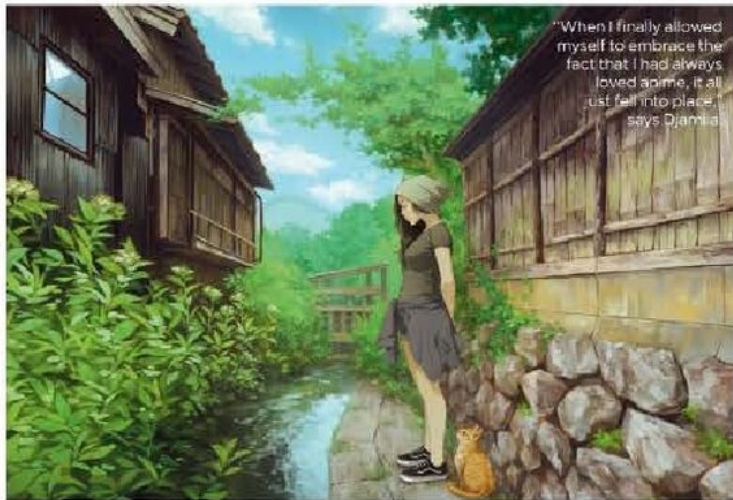
“As long as I can remember, everyone has tried to beat my anime influence out of me”

influences then you'll get work. Don't worry about trying to fit in - there's always someone out there like you in all industries."

DEALING WITH CRITICISM

Following your inspirations can result in a conflict of artistic as well as professional interests. Some styles come under fire from other creators, which in Djamila's case left her feeling frustrated and insecure about her abilities. "As long as I can remember,

Adopting a certain style because it's seen as popular usually isn't the way to creative fulfilment, warns Djamila. "But it can be, if it's the right fit for you."



"When I finally allowed myself to embrace the fact that I had always loved anime, it all just fell into place," says Djamila.



"Your voice is defined by your experiences, interests and cultural references," says Toni.



"You find your own direction and distinctive aesthetic by being vulnerable and challenging yourself," says Dave.

everyone has tried to beat my anime influence out of me," she reveals. "I kept trying different styles that I thought were expected of me and that were properly 'artistic', but I never settled on anything."

After exploring different styles away from the glare of her teachers for a few years, Djamila decided to switch back to what is now her current style. "Ever since then, I've been having so much more fun with my work."

Anime and manga in particular seem to be susceptible styles. Given that the world is more connected than ever, Toni isn't surprised that they are popular styles, although that doesn't mean creators can rely on them entirely. "I think that if someone imitates a particular style or artist without adding in anything, they're not being honest with themselves," he says. "It's from the mix of influences that creative things happens."

"Manga is an art style that only comes under criticism in a narrow field

in this industry," Dave adds. "If you enjoy doing a manga style and it makes you excited to sit down every day and draw, then you must follow your instincts."

FINDING YOUR VOICE

Knowing yourself and what excites you sounds like straightforward advice, but sometimes even the most assured artists could do with a

Don't get too bogged down in styles, Djamila recommends. "Artists can get so caught up in styles that they forget how to have fun and how to be themselves."



reminder to keep them on track. "An important thing I've learnt is that style is not only how you draw but what you draw," says Djamila. "Often, all it takes is for you to open your sketchbook and look at what you're doing when nobody gives you any instructions – the things you draw just for yourself."

"If you're completely lost, creating an influence map could also be a useful exercise," she adds. "Think about the artists or IPs that resonate with you, put them on a grid and analyse each one. What do you like about it? How could you incorporate that aspect into your own work?"

Dave takes a less-methodical approach. "I don't think you can truly find your voice without failing over and over and never settling for comfort," he says. "Don't limit yourself by being afraid to show the weakness of what you do. Address it and put it out there on the forefront. Show people what it takes to achieve your best version of you as an artist." ■



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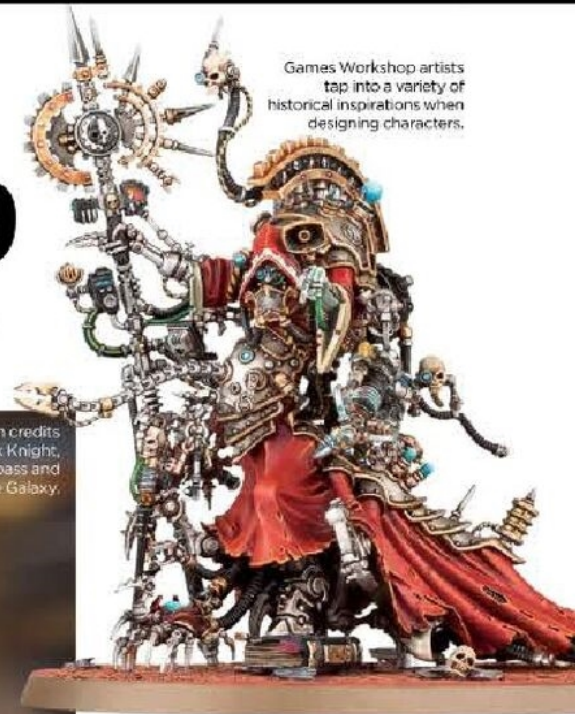
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More top talent joins Vertex 2019

Double whammy Speakers from VFX studio DNEG and tabletop gaming powerhouse Games Workshop fill out the Vertex roster

Games Workshop artists tap into a variety of historical inspirations when designing characters.



Adam Dowhirst's film credits include *The Dark Knight*, *The Golden Compass* and *Guardians of the Galaxy*.



This Endrinrigger concept art gives you an impression of what Games Workshop is after.

Vertex 2019, the annual event for CG specialists and aspiring artists, is just around the corner. Taking place in London's Olympia exhibition centre on 8 March, this year's conference sees top 2D and 3D talent come together to share industry insights and inspire creators.

On top of the talks by ILM and



Atomhawk we announced last month, we can also confirm that DNEG build supervisor **Adam Dewhirst** and Games Workshop



design manager **Ben Jefferson** will be in attendance at the event.

"Vertex 2019 is going to be great," says

Adam. "I'm building on my talk from last year - How to make a digital human in a day - by explaining how to create an entire city in 24 hours. It's all about using great resources that are available online, and working intelligently, enabling you to focus on design rather than getting bogged down by technical constraints."

Do you have the talent to help bring Games Workshop miniatures to life?



“We need people who can inspire our miniatures designers by adding to and enriching our range of models”

Meanwhile, Ben will be involved with the Games Workshop portfolio review. In terms of what the Nottingham-based gaming studio is interested in, Ben tells ImagineFX that, "We're looking for inspirational concept artists - individuals who can explore our Warhammer universes and generate new, unique ideas and concepts. We need people who can inspire our miniatures designers by adding to and enriching our range of fantasy models."

Have you secured your Vertex tickets? You can book them online at www.futureevents.uk/vertex/begin.

Admission to the exhibition area is free, while access-all-area passes are priced at £49, or £25 for students. See you there!



Mike Mahle

Superhero worship The Midwestern artist's space is part artist retreat, part pop-culture museum, and all fun



When we moved into our house, the basement was unfinished. Having young kids we had to

make the decision to use the basement as a play area, or a studio. We decided to split the difference and do half and half.

When it was finished, I had a space that was tailor-made to the way I work and was able to accommodate all the things I deemed essential, such as comic books and huge superhero statues. Priorities right?

PERSONAL LIBRARY

One of the things I wanted to make sure I had was plenty of room for reference. The front of my desk doubles as a small library for all sorts of art books and reference material. Some of my favourites include The Art of Robert E McGinnis, Lifestyle Illustration collections from the late 20th century and pretty much

Date Night is part of my Empire City collection. It's a self-published art compilation that's based around a fictional noir city.

Here's one and only piece of original comic book art. It's a page from Batman #610, by Jim Lee.



I'm a huge fan of James Bond across all mediums. This is my collection of 007 novels. With the exception of the latest book, I've read them all.

I'm an avid comic collector and like to use them as art around the studio. I switch them out every six months.

Can never have enough Prismacolor makers! I seem to like the stand more than the markers.



My self-published books Prime and Empire City, along with some old sketchbooks

It's always good to have a few Star Wars items around the place. The training remote in the case is a highly detailed model replica that I put together years ago.

Here's where I keep flat files for prints, client sketches, artist proof prints and samples of all my artwork. I want to paint a mural on the front of the unit at some point.

The character here is one of my own creation, as are all of the drawings, except Batman. They were heavily influenced by a lot of books that I was reading at the time.



One of several posters I created for Disney's release of the live action Jungle Book.

This is one and only skate deck design that I've painted.

“ One of the things I wanted to make sure I had was plenty of room for reference ”



I have a small artist cart that I keep many of my everyday art supplies in; it's stored in a space under my desk, but can be removed and wheeled around as needed.

My studio mascot Biscuit.



➡ anything put out by Brandon Ragnar Johnson or J Scott Campbell.

I'm highly organised and the way you see things here is usually how they look. However, if I've been deep into a piece for several days I tend to have reference and sketches sorted into piles about my desk. When I'm done I clip everything together and file it away under the job name.

EARLY COLLEGE WORK

I don't have much of my own work displayed in my studio, simply because I prefer to look to other artists for inspiration. The exception to this is the back wall where I have a half-dozen framed drawings that I did back in college, when I was trying to figure out what I was doing. There's some heavy Jim Lee-inspired stuff there.

Most of my work is digital. However, I always start with a loose sketch or a detailed drawing, depending on what's called for. A scanner and printer are

“Often I'll do a thumbnail sketch that can generate great energy and impulsiveness”

essential to the way I work. Often I'll do a quick thumbnail sketch that can generate great energy and impulsiveness. That can be hard to replicate on a larger scale, so I'll scan in the thumbnail, print it out at a larger size, and use the light table to capture the thumbnail's energy in more detail at a better size.

I always make time to create personal art. Either to try out something new, or just realise an image that's in my head. ROAR! is the result of the latter.



For my computer's battle station I use a Wacom Intuos and the Adobe Creative Suite, with Illustrator being the workhorse. Double screens are the way to go. I use one exclusively for palettes so that my main screen isn't clogged up with them.

Mike has been a professional graphic designer for over 20 years, and as an illustrator for about 10. Some of his clients include Disney, Sony Pictures, Warner Bros. and Rock Paper Books. He's also an active member of the Poster Posse. To see more of his work visit www.mikemahle.com.



Three images from my self-published art book *Empire City*, which was released last year.

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ImagineFX April 2019

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact the editor, Claire Howlett, on claire@imaginefx.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, England



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When you sign up to our weekly newsletter you'll receive an ebook of our Animation Artist special edition for free.

Newsletter request

Might I sign up for a printed copy of your advertised newsletter and complementary animation volume? As a hobbyist of this type of art, I do not have or require a computer or online equipment, but I do purchase your magazine on a regular basis.

FF Conner, Southampton, England

Claire replies Mr Conner, I'm afraid we can't print out the newsletter and send it to you as it only provides snippets of stories. You have to click on a link to get the full story, so it won't be any good for you. What a shame! For those unaware, we provide a weekly newsletter for our readers and there's a gift when you sign up. More details on page 32.

Not what I expect

I've been a big fan of ImagineFX for years, and I've always been happy with the magazine until today. I'm just writing in to express my disappointment that you didn't do anything to help out the person who lost all his magazines in a fire in California. I know you don't have to do anything, but it was disappointing that your response was just "you can buy them here".

The least you could have done was let him pick a couple of digital issues for



DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE? Don't worry – you can still get hold of it. Visit <https://ifxm.ag/171-ixf>.



A panel at last year's Vertex conference. Do you want us to create an event in your country? Let us know!

free. It wouldn't have cost you much to give him a year's subscription.

I just feel you could have done more for someone who was a loyal fan and had spent countless dollars buying issues and I'm really disappointed that you used his plight as a ploy to get readers to go buy back issues instead of just offering him something.

Tara, via email

Claire replies Thanks for your email, Tara. This is an interesting one for me because I agree with you. Unfortunately, I was off work sick over the deadline period, so someone on my team replied to the letters on my behalf. For reference, this is a very unusual occurrence. It has never happened before in my 10 years as editor. This person wasn't sure what to say on my behalf so decided to write what you saw. On my return to work, I was unhappy with what was written, but there was nothing we could do because the magazine had gone to press. In hindsight, we were all upset with how the reply came across.

As an aside, I had already emailed the person and offered to send some magazines, which he will have received by now.

I just want to thank you for writing in to support your fellow artist and to make your views known. I think this community really looks out for each other – it's what makes this art community so fantastic.

Can you come to the US?

I keep hearing about your event in London and seeing how you will meet the readers and also have workshops sessions... and I just wanted to ask if you'd come to Canada please – specifically to (or near) my home city of Ottawa! There's a great community here and I'm sure you would love it!

Jen, via email

Claire replies Jen, if it were up to me, I'd have already booked my tickets! We'd love to create more events in the future and know we have a big audience in Canada and the US. You'll be the first to know if we do!

FRESH PAINT

New works that have grabbed our attention



Sarah Schmidt
[@looonalou](https://www.instagram.com/looonalou)



Devious Squirrel
[@devioussquirrel](https://www.instagram.com/devioussquirrel)



Katee Pellerin
[@poopikat](https://www.instagram.com/poopikat)

If you've created art that you want us to shout about simply tag us on Twitter or Instagram, or find us on Facebook!

Artist Portfolio

AKUMAJOU DENSETSU

"Back-cover album art for the Castlevania III official soundtrack, later used as a poster."



Castlevania III
Dracula's Curse

あ く ま じ ょ う で ん せ つ

悪魔城伝説



34

ImagineFX April 2019

によって印刷された D&L SCREENPRINTING イラスト: SACHIN TENG © Konami Digital Entertainment

MONTRO



Artist Portfolio

SACHIN TENG

Dropping out of college, roughing it in motels, working up a mountain: the US artist tells **Gary Evans** about the high and lows of a roller-coaster career

Sachin Teng hadn't been to bed for six days straight. She was busy preparing for a show – Pratt Institute's notorious end-of-semester exhibition known as Survey. Everybody from the college was going to be there and, more importantly, so were the people from the Society of Illustrators. Sachin was flagging. She decided to have a power nap, another of the hour-long snoozes that kept her going this past week. She finds an empty classroom, makes a bed out of a couple of drawing benches, and closes her eyes.

Before Pratt, Sachin worked mainly in monochrome, pen or pencil drawings, still-life, line art. In 2007, she enrolled in communication design, focusing on illustration, but during her

first year she almost failed a couple of classes. The New York college made her realise she wasn't as advanced as some of her peers.

In the past, teachers preached lofty ideas about art: what art was, what art did. They said all the stuff Sachin was

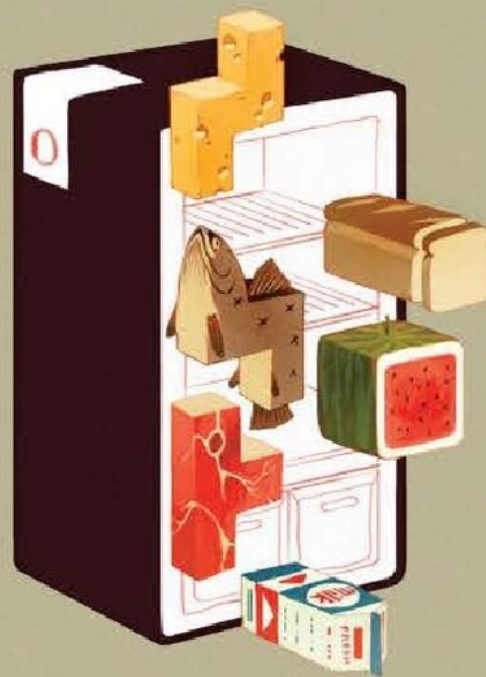
“No one woke me up. They just stared and thought ‘Yeah, same’”

into – comics, movies, video games – that wasn't real art.

Pratt believed otherwise. Communication design was a fancy way of saying commercial art – art for money. Here teachers taught Sachin how to get clients, run a business, market herself. They showed her how to do the one thing every working artist must learn to do: pay the rent. They set tight deadlines because tight deadlines are the reality of art for money. The Survey event was Sachin's chance to put this into practice.

TWEET TWEET

"This is a tongue-in-cheek commentary on Twitter and interconnectivity."



FRIDGE TETRIS

"Millennials always say that we have to 'Tetris' our stuff – fitting luggage into a tight space or food in a full fridge. So I made a literal reference to it."

The artist woke up from her hour-long power nap and saw the classroom was now full. A group of sophomores were in the middle of critique session. The students left Sachin to sleep because they were all in the same position: busy preparing for Pratt's end-of-semester exhibition.

"No one woke me up," the US illustrator says. "They just stared" ➤

Artist PROFILE

Sachin Teng

LOCATION: US

FAVOURITE ARTISTS: James Jean, Shintaro Kago, Josh Keyes, Katsuhiro Otomo and Kehinde Wiley

SOFTWARE USED: Photoshop, Illustrator

WEB: www.sachinteng.com

2050

"An illustration I did for an article about how robots might not kill us but might, in fact, take us with them into the future together."



Illustration: Mago 2798



AGNES DEI

"Evangelion is heavily based on Christian mythology. Agnes Dei is a hymn about sacrifice, which is what happens to one character."



ROCK 'N' ROLL

A screen-printed poster for Mondo Tees. Mega Man is always dying - that's how the game's designed. So I knew I had to show him dying."

➡ and thought: 'Yeah, same.' Survey was hell. We all had horror stories. I used to pull all-nighters end on end. But it got me a couple of spots in the Society of Illustrators, and even one award. When it was over, all I remembered was the exhaustion."

What Sachin did next seemed like a gamble. She quit. Maybe Pratt taught her too well, because she decided to use the final year's tuition fee to set herself up as a working artist for real. Her mother agreed - on one condition. If it didn't work out, she had to go back to college. Her mother also gave tight deadlines: two years.

THE FREELANCER'S FIX

Sachin went on holiday with her family to Taiwan. They went on a tour of the mountains. Everybody else took in the scenery, enjoying the experience of the open road. However, Sachin set

“If you turn down work you feel like you're turning down money, which is scary”

up office in the back of the car, worked on her laptop with a SIM card in a USB stick for Wi-Fi. She had a deadline. She needed to finish an illustration, send it off to the art director for approval, and she had an hour left to do it. Then her battery died.

The tour stopped at a store in the middle of nowhere. The rain lashed down on this small building made of corrugated iron. Sachin ran inside to ask if they had a socket to charge her laptop. They did. With the clock ticking, she breathed enough life into the battery to turn it on, catch a Wi-Fi signal, and send off her work.

"This, supposedly, was a vacation," Sachin says. "It's funny to me now, but at the time I was so stressed out. Work-life balance is hard as a freelancer."

This is the freelancer's fix. Starting out, you're going to be broke - possibly for years. Sachin was. After college, she left New York, her hometown, and moved to Los Angeles. Slowly, steadily, work came in. She overcompensated. She said yes to everything, anything. She worked weekends, worked holidays. "If you turn down work," Sachin says, "you feel like you're turning down money. Which is scary as a freelancer, because they might ➡

CREATING ART BY DESIGN

Sachin reveals how she thinks like a designer while illustrating this poster for an animated film

1 TWO WORLDS COLLIDE

This is a poster based on the animated film *Ponyo*. I wanted it to feel like two worlds colliding. In the film the entire world is briefly flooded, so I wanted to make the canvas to feel that way. Sosuke is being forced into this small space. It's almost claustrophobic. The other thing was the conversation between the two characters. The canvas is split in half and two objects mirror each other on either side. The colours in the initial sketch are quite unrelated to the colours I actually ended up using. When you're trying to sell an idea you have to make it read in the simplest terms. I was colour-coding objects more than designing a colour composition.



2 COMPOSITION ANCHORS

Here I'm starting to render the main focal points of the illustration. They're the anchors of the composition, so they take priority. And I also want to establish the water refraction on Sosuke early on. This one of those uneasy moments: if you're not paying attention you don't see it right away, but you eventually see that the above doesn't line up with the below.



3 SETTING THE STAGE

Once the actors are in place, I set the stage by creating the environment of help in which they'll rest, so it's grounded. I knew I was going to have dozens of fish and marine life, and without grounding everything it was going to be messy and impossible to know where to place them in space. At this point, you'll notice the large swath of blue I laid over the entire piece. I wanted to be unifying the colour palette so the colours would be cohesive and feel like they belonged to the same world.



4 FILLING IN DETAILS

More kelp gives depth and pushes the space inwards. To ensure it's not busy or hard to read, the marine life form a spiral around Ponyo and I don't let too much background light through the fish. Going from big fish to little fish creates a healthy variety of scale. Limit the numbers of the largest objects, and have lots of the smallest objects. I changed the colours of some lines, because too much black in the line art tends to flatten the image out. Details are always last, big shapes and colours first. You don't start hanging ornaments before you have a tree.

➤ never contact you ever again. But you have to learn to be okay with that."

Sachin's best art comes when the client enables her to do her own thing. But commercial work is often about compromise. The client is entitled to give detailed instruction. They're paying for it, after all.

"The confusing and weird clients are the ones that want you to do art in someone else's style, which is theft plain and simple. And it makes about as much sense as calling an electrician to fix your plumbing. You just have to take it on the chin and try not to take it personally. Enjoy your art as much and as often as possible.

"Not every piece can be your magnum opus, which means if you have to mail it in to meet a deadline, you'll have to submit work you don't think is finished. I don't know anyone who hasn't submitted work they wish they could add just one more detail to."

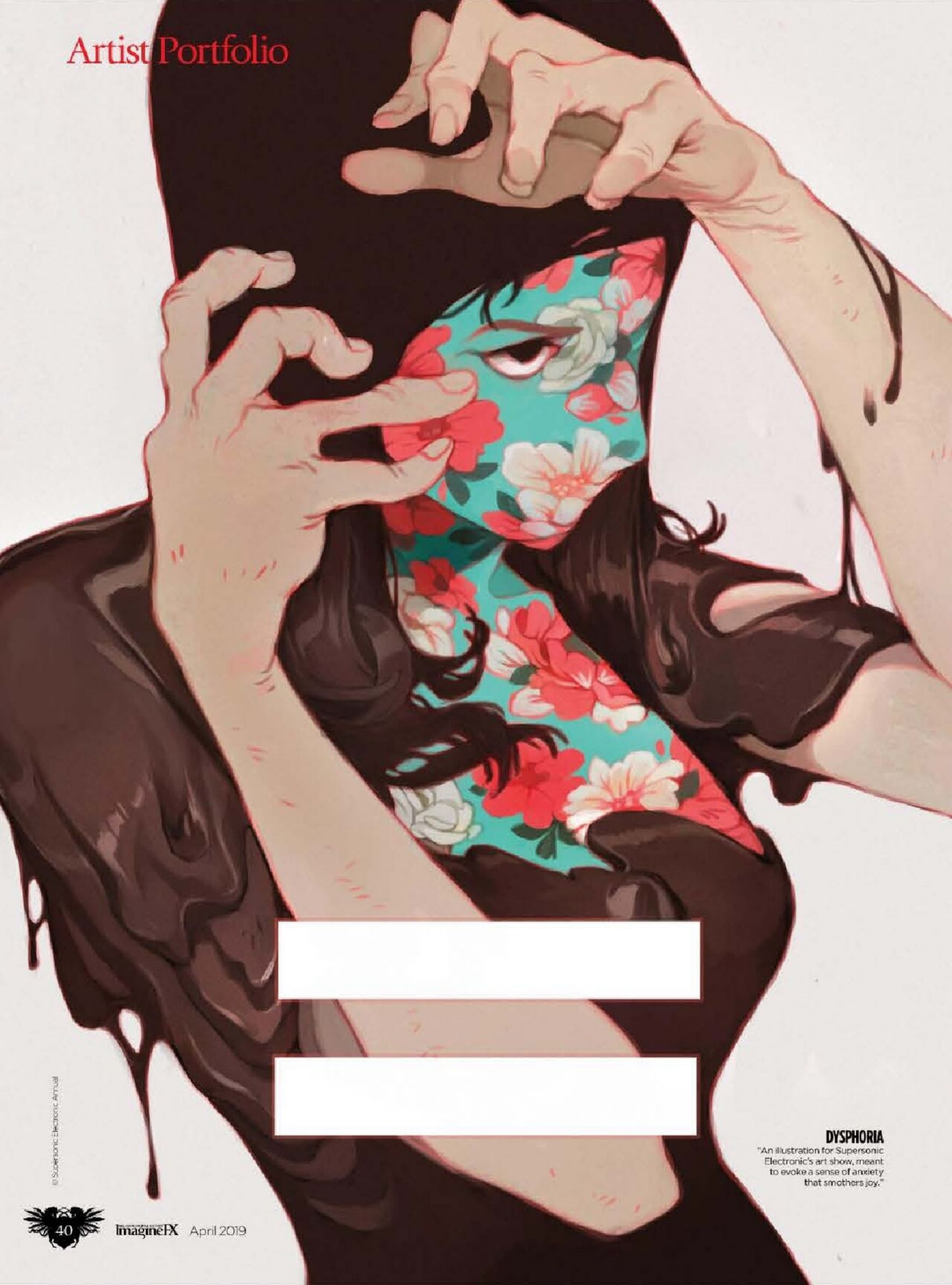
Sachin has worked for a wide range of clients in a diverse range of fields:

“You're not stuck in any one field. This is the best thing about being a freelancer”

advertising (Coca-Cola, Disney), editorial (The Atlantic, The New Yorker), and publishing (Dark Horse Comics, Penguin Random House). A professor at Pratt, Rudy Gutiérrez, taught Sachin how to market herself in this way. The economy's up and down, client's come and go, but you've got to make sure things are always ticking over. Finish a job and you're on to the next. If you're not making money in editorial, switch to advertising. You're not stuck in any one field. This is the best thing about being a freelancer.

LANDING THE THING

Sachin starts every new piece with research – reading the book, watching the film, listening to the album – getting to know whatever it is she's illustrating. Research is especially important for editorial work on social or political issues. Sachin makes a comprehensive mood board of relevant images, then sketches and brainstorm, mostly in Photoshop or Illustrator. ➤



DYSPHORIA

"An illustration for Supersonic Electronic's art show, meant to evoke a sense of anxiety that smother's joy."



➤ Occasionally an idea jumps out, but usually she has to work at it. She never forces this stage: "Making a good illustration is about problem-solving. The conceit is to finesse it into an elegant solution."

From here it's about "logistics." The thing's flying. All Sachin has to do is land it smoothly. But that's easier said than done, and it's frustrating when the illustration on the page doesn't match the idea in her head.

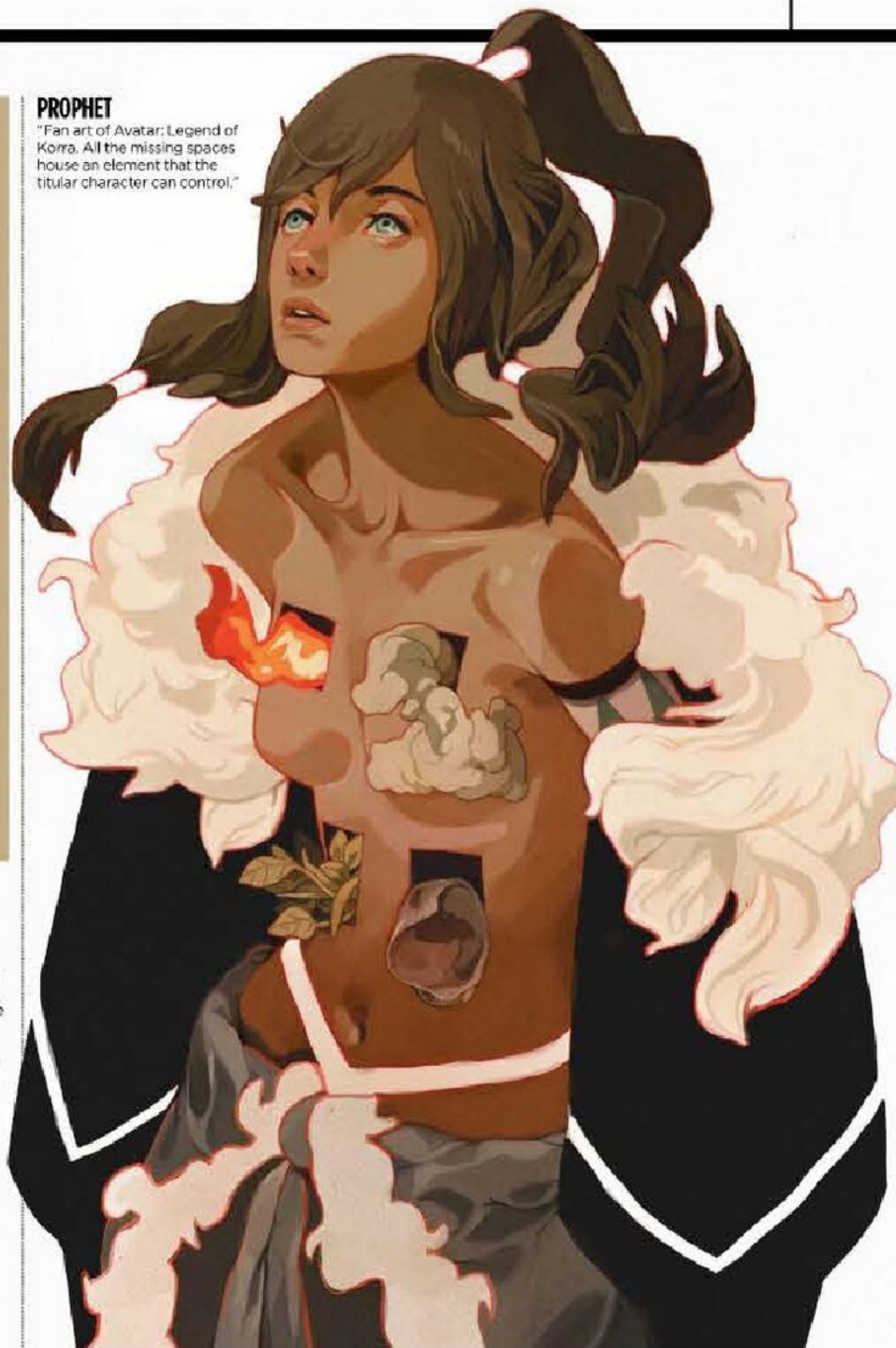
"You have to see what it is about the choices you've made that steered it off course, which can take time you may not have. A lot of the time, a successful illustration comes down to whether or not I can figure it out in time."

ESCAPE FROM THE BED ZONE

Sachin works from home, always near a window, and struggles with the "biblical temptation" of her bed being a few feet from her desk. Not a morning person, she wakes up and turns on music or the TV as loud as possible, to force herself out of bed. She walks to Starbucks for coffee or, if she's really struggling, the corner store for Red Bull. A lot of the day is spent answering emails, or printing, assembling and posting merchandise. When she gets to work, it's on a Wacom tablet connected to an iMac.

PROPHET

"Fan art of Avatar: Legend of Korra. All the missing spaces house an element that the titular character can control."



DAYS OF FUTURE PAST

"Done for an art show about retro futurism. It shows the wonder and imagination of what we thought of the future, would be, juxtaposed with the moon landing – which is the real-world counterpart."

Her work features lots of pop culture icons – the Nintendo Game Boy, the Sony Walkman, the Nike Dunks. This is because her art is a self-portrait. New York City kids like her grew up with these things. Artists who are starting out always worry about finding their styles, their voice. Sachin says you've always got it – you just don't realise. "Your style is just you," she says. "It's

ironic because to be original means to do something no one has ever done before. I'm a little illustrator, a little designer, a little fine artist. It's more fun that way."

MOTHER'S DEADLINE

Sachin moved to Los Angeles to financially support her partner, who'd been offered a job there. They lived in a motel for a couple of weeks, then took the first apartment that would take them in the Van Nuys area, where they slept on an air mattress for another three months. Pretty soon, Sachin had used all her savings. ➤

“I’m a little illustrator, a little designer, a little fine artist. It’s more fun that way”

HOW TO BEAT ARTIST'S BLOCK

Sachin explains why drawing like a child can help when you're stuck

I was working on my junior thesis for illustration at Pratt. No matter how hard I tried, I just couldn't catch a break in this class. Nothing that had carried me before mattered to this professor. And I couldn't understand what he meant by "confounding" – his favourite descriptor for conceptual work.

It was about to be the end of the semester and I still hadn't made a breakthrough. My initial sketches for the thesis were shot down. So I had to start over. I was certain I was just going to fail. Painting alone wasn't getting me anywhere so I decided to just read a lot. There had to be books or articles, essays, something that would give me some insight I wasn't seeing. I eventually landed on a book called Visual Thinking, which contained a description about how children draw compared to adults, the way people think and perceive, and it made something click.

I got to work and I ended up with this image, one of a five painting series. No rendering. No drawing. And the airplane blueprint is just collaged on top. I had never collaged anything in my life. I don't make work like this anymore, but the mindset that helped me make it sticks with me to this day.



THINKING LIKE A CHILD

Sachin channelled her inner child when she was struggling with course work at Pratt, and came up with this artwork.



MEANWHILE

"Dale Cooper is trapped in the Black Lodge and the 'meanwhile' line from the show is foreshadowing his imprisonment by his doppelganger. Hence the white eye."

“The only thing that will set you apart and move you forward is to be the most faithful version of yourself you can be”

➤ She considered getting a “proper job.” But by then her partner was making money and able to support them. Sachin hated not paying her own way. Plus, her mother’s two-year deadline was almost up.

“This was the one time I truly, deeply felt leaving school had been a mistake. But my mom saw me busting my ass and, even though I wasn’t quite there, she could see it. So she lifted the two-year deadline and let it play out to see where it went. My mom’s a saint.”

LEAVING LA

What Sachin’s doing next seems like a gamble. She’s leaving Los Angeles after almost a decade and going home to New York. Pratt showed Sachin how to do the one thing every working artist

must do: pay the rent. These days, that’s not so much of a struggle. But the life of an artist will always come down to the conflict between doing good work and making good money. Sachin’s still working on that one.

“My own art still lacks fearlessness, because at the end of the day I need to make a living. I always regret the work I make when I’m being a coward, and I never regret the work I make when I’m confident.

“The only thing that will set you apart and move you forward is to be the most faithful version of yourself you can manage, and stop stressing yourself out and beating yourself up trying to live up to what you think you need to be. A lot of artists can be way too hard on themselves.”



MAHAKALA

"Based on the Buddhist wrath deity Mahakala, I am Buddhist myself and have always been fond of the imagery."

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PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



Issue 171

March 2019

Audra Auclair creates our compelling cover art in Procreate. You'll also get composition and anatomy advice, plus we explore ways to avoid a creative crash, talk to VR guru Goro Fujita, and pore over Loish's sketchbook.



Issue 170

February 2019

Get better at telling stories with your art, with pro advice from cover artist Jon Foster and Abigail Larson. We explain how to make your time on Patreon a success, and interview illustrators Scott M Fischer and Phil Hale.



Issue 169

January 2019

An exclusive look at the art for Sable, we learn what recruiters want from game artists, visit Polish studio CD Projekt Red - home of The Witcher series and Cyberpunk 2077 - and talk to Halo lead artist Darren Bacon.



Issue 168

Christmas 2018

Character art advice from cover artist Mel Milton, add texture and colour to your portraits, and pencil shading techniques. Elsewhere, we talk to Magic: The Gathering's Svetlin Velinov and fantasy painter Vanessa Lemen.

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August 2018



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Sketchbook

Martin Abel

This illustrator is busy designing creatures for his very own fantasy stories, and his sketchbook bears the fruits of his labours

BLUE FAUN

"I wanted to try creating a character with a long, elegant form and graceful flow, but also a very otherworldly nature."



WING CONCEPT

"Just playing with the idea of a different faerie body structure and leafy wings."



"I wanted to try creating a character with a long, elegant form..."

Artist PROFILE

Martin Abel

LOCATION: Australia



Martin has been freelancing for 15 years, working for comic books, magazines and a wide range of clients. He's recently delved into creating art for board games with Plaid Hat Games' new title: Crystal Clans. While taking client jobs here and there, he's now focusing on his own characters and stories, and hopes to bring something out into the world very soon.
www.martinabelart.com



ROCK TROLLS

"On a trip to Mount Wellington, I imagined these rock trolls living at its peak. I like to think they would be a hybrid of a mountain goat and a troll. Because their skin's made of stone, they can blend into their environment."

FOLK OF THE WILDS

"Some early concepts of the Fae, drawn traditionally and with tones added using ink washes."



LEAFY FAE

"I'm developing my own fantasy world. It consists of many creatures from legend, one of which being the Fae, more commonly known as faeries. I have the fun of creating my own faerie race, and the challenge of making them unique in appearance compared to all the other fantasy fiction out there."



Sketchbook

CHARACTER DESIGN

"A mysterious little fellow who can tell your fortune by rolling magic die, but such wisdom comes with a price. A small portion of your soul is his favoured form of currency."

SKETCHING ADVENTURES

"When I travel, I like to draw in small Moleskine sketchbooks, with fine pens and a travel watercolour kit. This page is from my UK travel journal."

“When I travel, I like to draw in Moleskine sketchbooks...”



PISKIES

"I love to develop my own creatures and lore. This includes this race of Piskies, who live deep in the forests of the Western Wilds."

WARM-UP SKETCHES

"I like to have total freedom in my warm-up sketches, so I usually draw whatever comes to mind. It's fun to not have any clear direction and to find out what my mind wants to come up with."



PISKIE HOMES

"It's fun to imagine what types of homes piskies might live in. I think they dwell in refurbished hollow trees, and being such a homely race they welcome visitors with open arms."



Sketchbook



ELVEN ROYALTY

"A quick study of some elitist elven royalty. I enjoyed drawing them so much, I had to colour them in Procreate to see how they might look in lavish red velvet and luxurious gold accessories."



FACES OF FAE

"While developing the faeries, I wanted to divert from the character Wysh and focus on a couple of different genders and ages with these little head sketches."



“I especially love combining fine, detailed lines with watercolour paints”



PAINTING FUN

"I'm trying different mediums and ways of drawing. I especially love combining fine, detailed lines with watercolour paints."



SWAMP NYMPH

"This nymph will lure its victim in with her beauty, then change to reveal its true form, which is a little... pointier than expected."





FLOW!

"One of my favourite things to draw is long, flowing hair, so this was really just an excuse to have fun."

MAKE YOUR WYSH

"I drew this to get back into the groove after a long holiday. I liked the character so much that she's woven her way into the story I'm working on, and spawned my current designs for the faeries."

Do you want to share your sketches with your fellow ImagineFX readers? Send us an email with a selection of your art, captions for each piece and a photo and bio of yourself to sketchbook@imaginefx.com

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS **ImagineFX** **Workshops**

**Workshops assets
are available...**

Download each workshop's resources by turning to page 8. And if you see the video workshop badge, you can watch the artist in action, too.



Advice from the world's best artists



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Photoshop

PAINT A FANTASY MANGA PORTRAIT

Asia Ladowska puts aside her ink pens and markers, and embraces the digital painting process of a soft and colourful manga character

Artist PROFILE

Asia Ladowska
LOCATION: England

The Polish artist and Instagram art ambassador is also the author of the book *Sketch with Asia*, which is set to be published later this year.
www.ladowska.com



For this workshop I'm painting a beautiful manga character. My go-to tools are usually traditional media. I'm most comfortable working with ink pens, pencils and markers, and so I'm learning a lot when I'm painting with digital tools.

I have no idea what the end result will look like, so I'll make sure to share in this workshop every

important step and my thinking process, as well as why I make certain decisions that affect the final appearance of the character.

While painting colour concepts and experimenting with different palettes in the sketching phase, I was listening to music and believe it or not, the final colours of this illustration were inspired by a song. I heard the line, "Day gives way to night" and that's when the deep red

and blue sparkled in my mind. If not for the song and the feedback from ImagineFX I'm sure the girl's hair would have ended up being pastel pink and blue (like the hair of most of my characters that I've painted digitally). It's exciting to experiment with colours that I've never used together before.

So, prepare to meet Sunset, a happy girl that's winking at you from the cover of my favourite art magazine!

GET YOUR RESOURCES

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1 Generating concept sketches

The brief I receive is pretty straightforward, with a lot of freedom for experimenting. I start by sketching some close-up shots of a woman in her 20s, making sure she's looking at the viewer and that she's smiling. I always make the expression of the character I draw myself, so the sketching process has left me in a really good mood! ➡

RESOURCES WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP
CUSTOM BRUSH:
HAIR BRUSH

The hard and soft edges of this brush are ideal for drawing hair.

In depth Manga portrait





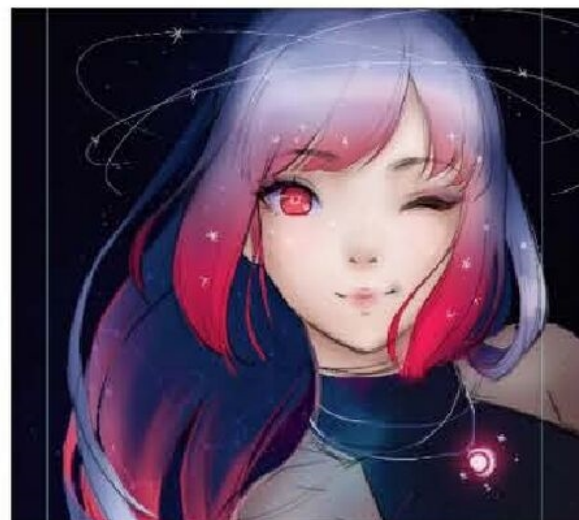
2 Apply colour tests to the chosen sketch concept

I introduce colour to one of the concepts that's been chosen for the cover. Although I'm trying to be creative with the palette, and despite the brief saying "No pink", I'm sneakily trying to introduce pink combined with blue, two different light sources and some space textures.



3 Acting on the first round of feedback

The scary moment is here! I receive my first feedback on the colour sketches that I've sent in. It's also my first experience of having someone edit my colour sketches and say what needs adjusting. The ImagineFX team ask me to change the pink to a more red-looking hue, add stars in the hair and give the girl a necklace. I'm panicking just a little right now. Does this mean no more pink...?



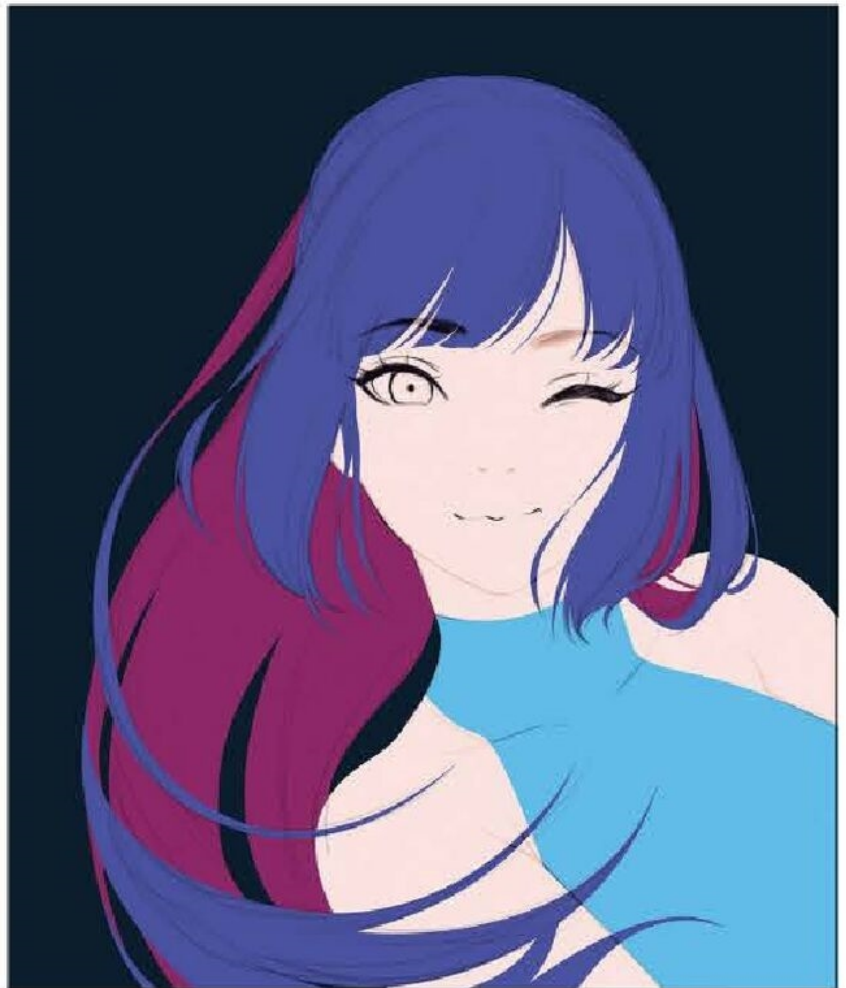
4 Forgetting about the pink

I start over with new colours and a new concept for the clothes. I wasn't really happy about the request to remove the pink, but I know that I can still make this work. I paint on a larger canvas now, with extra space around the character and guides that indicate the actual crop of the cover image. I'm listening to music that keeps me relaxed and, surprisingly, also brings new colour ideas!



5 Second round of feedback

The new concept worked for ImagineFX; however, I'm asked to make some more changes. Because the painting was looking a little too dark, the team suggests brightening the dress and background, and introducing some yellow highlights in the eye. Sure! I'm much more confident on how to take the painting further now.



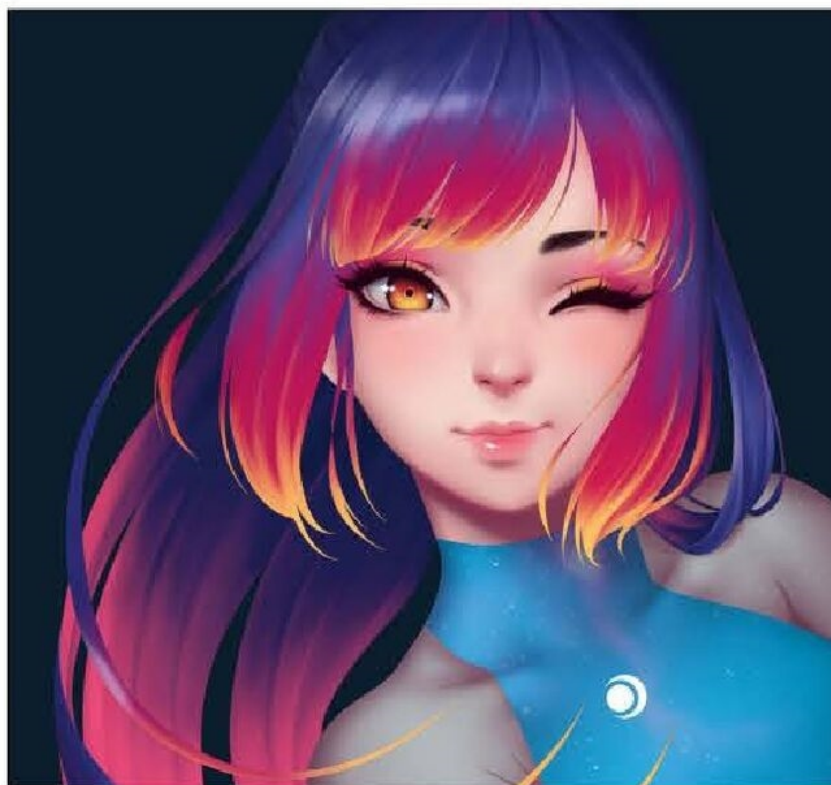
6 Making selections to separate out elements

Making selections is a long and tedious process, but it's worth the effort. Some artists just paint on one or more layers, but I like to keep everything editable and easy to select. So for each element, like the skin, the hair at the front, hair at the back and the dress I make flat selections with the Pen tool, all on separate layers.



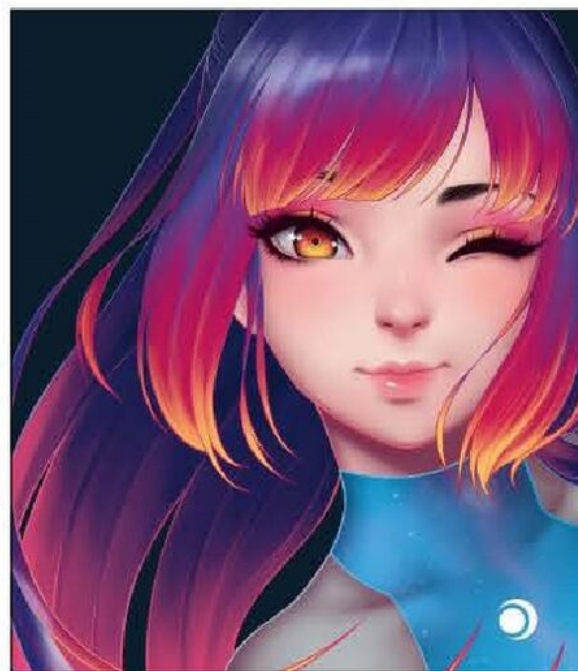
7 Painting basic colours and shading

Once I've made a selection I usually just lock the Transparency or create a clipping mask to the exact shape layer and then start painting. I'm adding basic colours that I want to use as a reference and then some simple shading to all of the character's elements, such as her skin or dress. This stage is more about finding the right colours than trying to make everything look perfect. ➤➤



8 Painting hair texture

Using the basic colours of the hair in the previous step, I paint up and down with my custom Hair Brush to make the strands look more like hair. As simple as it sounds, however, it takes me a few hours to paint in all those strands!



9 Creating line art

I think that a key characteristic for manga-style art is line art, so I always add it into my work at some point. Black lines would make the painting look too harsh, so I use colours that I've swatched from various places in the painting. To change the colour I initially picked I can always lock the pixels of the layer and try different ones, so there's no need to spend more time making selections.



10 Painting in the stars

For stars in the background I use the brush that can be downloaded from Adobe's Creative Cloud. From the Brushes menu click Get More Brushes. It's one of Kyle's Spatter brushes pack, called Dots 1. I adjust the Spacing and Size Jitter, add in the stars, then apply the Blur and Overlay filters. Now the stars look perfect. I paint the stars on the character's face and hair on a separate layer by hand.



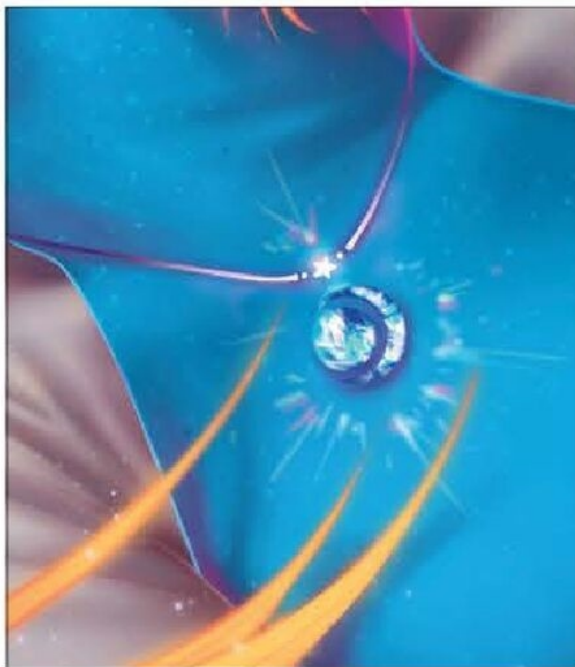
11 Softening the image

In my opinion this phase drastically changes the illustration. I no longer stick to selections, but create a new group above everything and then paint. I use a soft Round brush to soften selected edges, such as the yellow ends of the woman's fringe with a colour picked from exactly the same place. This makes them look like they're glowing.



12 Introduce reflective light on the face

With such a colourful and strong environment, glowing hair and lots of stars, Sunset's face was looking a little flat and not part of the environment. I need to remedy this. On a Multiply layer I add some shadows to make her look more three-dimensional, and on another one set to Normal I apply some pink and yellow on the jaw line and blue on the neck, because those colours would have an effect on the shadows.



13 Design a crystal necklace

It's time for detailing. The sleeves of Sunset's dress are missing crease lines, the dress itself receives a few brushstrokes, and then I add a diamond necklace in the shape of the Sun and the Moon to complement her look. I also add a few constellations to her hair to make her look even more magical.



14 Applying the finishing touches

To finish off, my process is almost always the same. I add a Color Balance filter layer with Midtones at +3, -3 and +3, respectively, to push the reds, pinks and blues a little further. I also flatten all layers as a copy above everything and apply a Gaussian Blur filter to it. I erase the parts that I don't want blurred, and now Sunset looks much softer and finished. Even though her hair isn't pink, I'm pleased how this painting took me on a space journey beyond my usual art frontiers! ●

THE EVENT FOR THE CG COMMUNITY

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PAGE 27



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Construct quality designs, learn cutting-edge techniques and hear from the top agencies and artists creating the best archviz in the business.



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NETWORKING

Meet your heroes and make some new friends

In the evening there will be a panel discussion, followed by a networking event, where you can relax and meet fellow artists.




DESIGN CREATURES WITH PERSONALITY

Guille Rancel passes on his creature design skills, showing you how to apply key art ideas such as movement, volume, shape and contrast


Guille Rancel
LOCATION: Spain

Guille's an illustrator and 2D animator who's currently working in the fields of comic books, animations and character design.

<https://ifxm.ag/rancel>



Designing creatures is one of my favourites art assignments.



I've been drawing them since I was a

child, trying to tell a story featuring my creations without words.

There are so many possibilities, and so many new creatures to find. But that's the point of figure design. Comic books, animation and novels inspired me to create my own art.

And there's no better motivation than knowing you can earn a living by doing what you love. But it's not easy. I've always considered art like a sport. You need to practice and train if you want to improve.

When you draw every day and have thousands of used sheets of paper and sketchbooks, you learn some tricks to make the process a little easier. And I have no excuse for not having inspiration at hand.

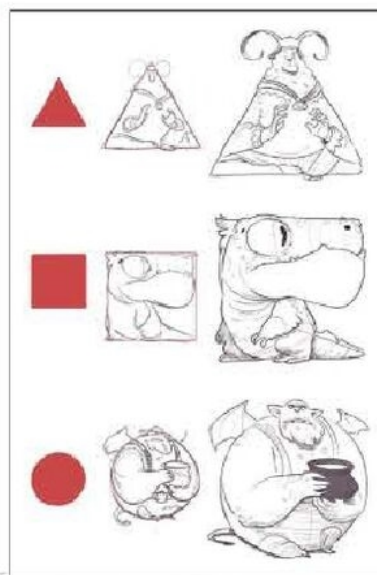
It's good to be self-critical, always keep learning and try out new tools. Practice is the key. Draw everything; you'll get faster and your brain will become a database full of references.

There are also a few basic tips you already may know, but it's good to go over them again: **contrast, shapes, lines of action, movement, perspective...** Put all these together and **your creatures will look alive and be full of personality.**



1 QUICK THUMBNAIls

Drawing quick and simple thumbnails is a helpful warm-up exercise. There are a few things to bear in mind, though. I always try to keep the design simple; the silhouette needs to be easy to read. I use a solid colour and sometimes I draw over it with a darker colour tone. In this case I'm concentrating on creatures, which means I'm free to create different shapes, combining object, animal and human elements.



2 USING BASIC SHAPES

What if I start with basic shapes to create my character? All of them can turn into a creature, right? You might think this is a limitation, but it also forces you to be extra creative. This approach can be a good method for designing a squad of characters that work together, like superheroes. These shapes are just one way to start your designs. Sometimes I break the silhouette by adding elements, or I leave some empty spaces.



3 LOOKING FOR REFERENCES

If I don't feel inspired to draw then I'll look around for some references. In this case, I'll search for objects that I can either use as part of a creature, or just act as a launch point to galvanise me into action. My main reference sources are mythology, animals and nature and so I'll draw some objects (African masks, runes, a cauldron...) and some animals. My sketchbooks are full of such doodles and they can easily end up being part of a figure design.



4 RANDOM WARM-UPS

Another useful starting exercise is to simply draw without a specific purpose. And it's important to me to do this without references. I don't expect to create my greatest piece of art this way, but this can inspire future projects. Maybe I'll pay attention to these sketches someday and fresh ideas will come to mind. It's also a good exercise to banish the dreaded artist's block.

“My main references are mythology, animals and nature”



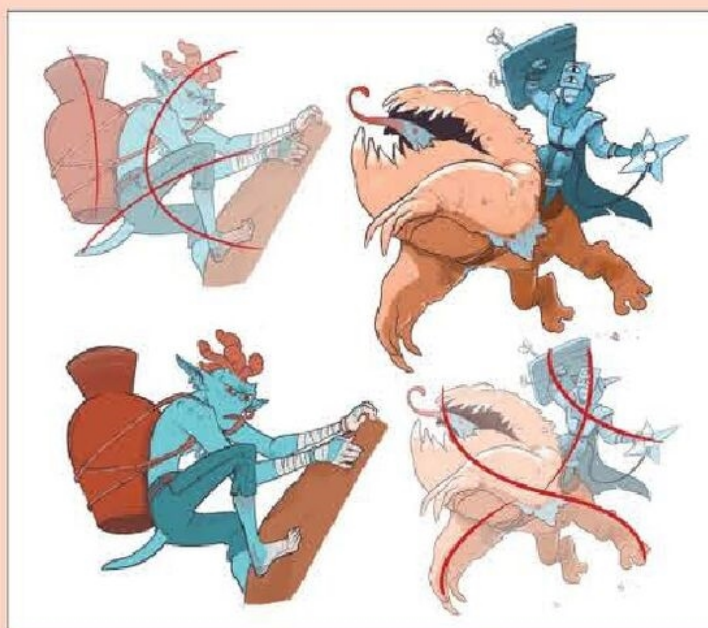
5 COMBINING BASIC SHAPES

This approach can lead to interesting results. One of my previous thumbnails is a blend of triangles, circles and a rectangle. When I sketch over this basic form I can see immediately that it's a one-eyed warrior hare carrying a shield and a candle. I start with a very simple doodle in greyscale and then add some details in the colour drawing. This breaks up the symmetry and make this character more visually appealing. ➡



6 IMPORTANCE OF BODY LANGUAGE

If you want your creatures to be expressive then it's crucial to understand anatomy and body language. Combine these two key topics and your creation will feel more alive. I believe it's vital to understand how bodies can express an emotion. You can obtain references from plenty of sources: study films, friends and model sessions; look in the mirror; or take some photos of interesting poses. This step is crucial. As a cartoon character designer, I tend to exaggerate these body expressions with more pronounced curves or shapes.



7 DYNAMIC POSES AND LINES OF ACTION

Using simple lines will define the movement of the creature. These are called lines of action. They'll vary depending on the creature's mood and activity. Straight lines can make your figure look boring or static, so I often use curved and contrasting lines because they result in more eye-catching body positions. It's crucial to draw a range of dynamic poses, because they're a useful way of testing your creature's proportions and anatomy.



8 NOTHING'S SET IN STONE

Maintain your creativity by revisiting older designs and producing variants that will work in that universe. Here I'm keeping the same basic shapes and proportions for the different versions. Colours and materials have an important role to play, too. What if, instead of leaves, he has crystal hair? Or maybe there's a constant flame on the top of his head? These variations can enrich your original concept. Other options include changing the size, age or sex of the character.

“ Maybe there's a constant flame on the top of his head? ”

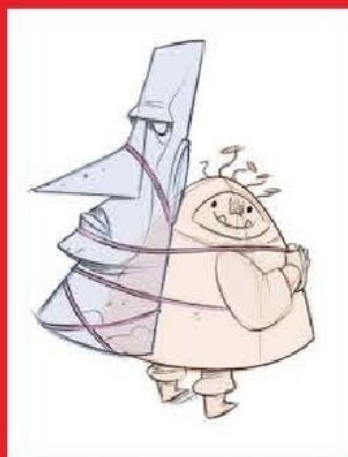
9 THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTRAST

Contrast is a basic concept that you need to bear in mind when designing a creature. This contrast can be between colours, shapes, objects and more



A Simple sketch

I draw some basic shapes. Any contrast between them will be most obvious during this stage. One creature will be curvy, the other straight. This can be very rough - there's no need for details. Once I find something I like it's time for the next stage.



B Details and attitude

I work more on the sketch, adding details like the ropes and plants. You can enhance the personality of your creature by adding contrast to the attitude. In this case, a monster is happy carrying a very serious stone head. I'm also using contrasting colours for them, increasing the visual effect and making them complementary characters.



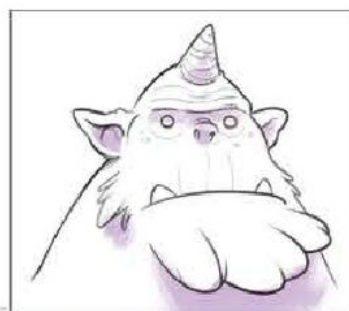
C Adding light and environment

The final step is adding additional details such as texture, shadows and a background. It's time to paint them all. Texture will enhance personality and give the figures the spirit of adventure. The background is part of the story, so I add a path and some mountains inspired by Chinese art. ➡



10 ADDING OBJECTS

An object can be a good way to further strengthen a creature's design. These props can boost their personality and charisma, and can also enrich their back story. What are they carrying? And why? Maybe they're carrying luggage, or they're holding a lantern to light the path into a mysterious forest. Depending on what they have on their back or in their hands you can define their jobs or roles in your narrative.



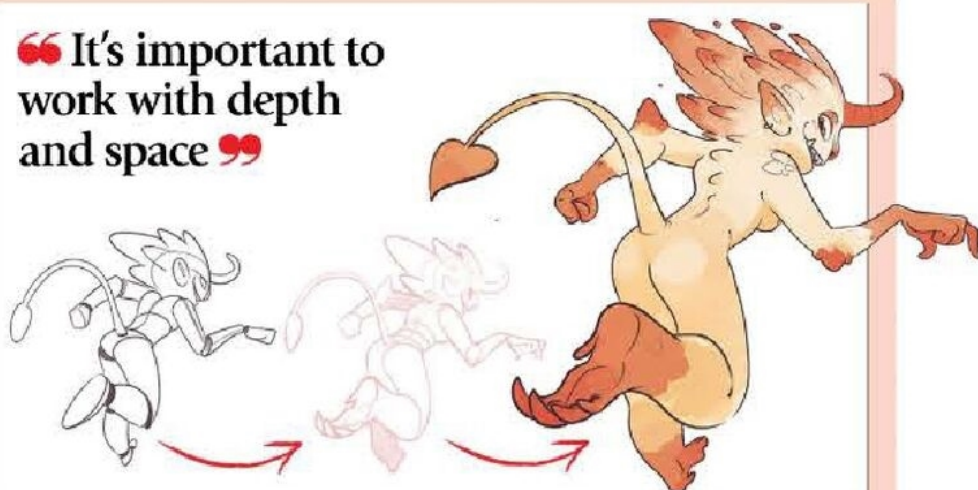
11 EXPERIMENT WITH FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

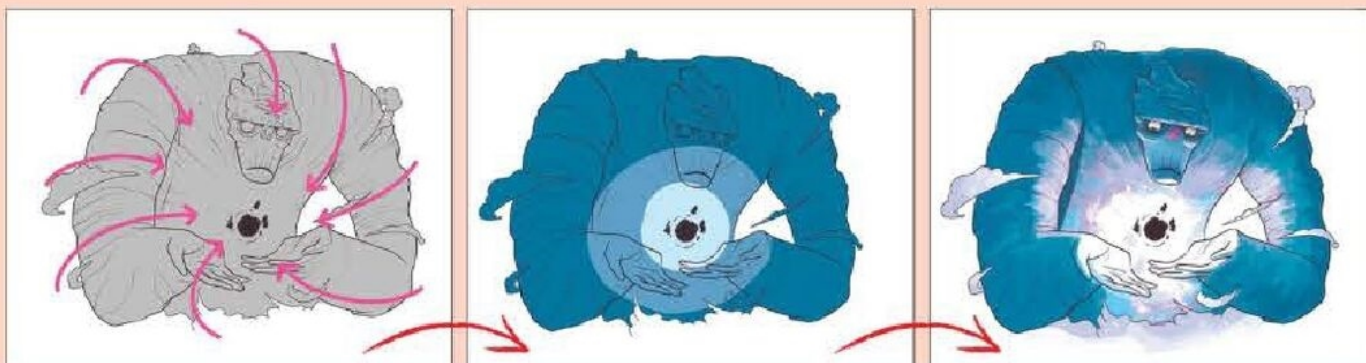
Body poses are of vital importance when showing a creature's emotion, but so is their facial expressions. Both work together. Try some basic emotions like happiness or anger, then try less-common ones. By placing a small mirror close to your work area, or using your camera phone, you can use yourself as reference. Study how the facial muscles move. Essentially, eyebrows and mouth will do the most amount of work for basic fantasy creatures. Consider adjusting the ears while squashing or stretching the main shape of the head to accentuate these emotions.

12 ADD SOME PERSPECTIVE

Another way to improve your creature designs is adding some perspective. Symmetry can be very boring, and a simple pose viewed from the front may fail to resonate with the viewer. So it's important to work with depth and space, to give your creature a strong feeling of movement. Try different angles when you sketch your characters, and look for references if you're struggling. With this creature, I've increased the stroke width in some areas that are close to the viewer to boost the feeling of depth.

“It's important to work with depth and space”





13 FOCUS THE VIEW ON YOUR CREATURE

With some simple lines defining a direction, you can create a point of interest in your drawing where you can focus the viewer's attention. This visual flow leads the viewer's eyes in the direction you want. You can even create different entry points and there are a lot of ways to achieve this. Faces and hands are very expressive, so concentrate your efforts here. Colour and lighting can also help. Increase the brightness or ramp up the saturation of the area that you want the viewer to focus on.



14 TELLING A STORY

Does this creature have a back story? And how can you tell it? It's good to choose the right moment. The attitude and action of the creature will play an important role, even if they're standing still or looking at something. The environment plays an important role, too. It helps to explain what's happening to your creature. Adding some props and details in the background will support the story and give context to the figure's personality.



15 LIGHTING AND ATMOSPHERE

Lighting and colour are key tools to use when painting creature concepts. You must play with lights and shadows to create interesting and atmospheric environments. This will focus the viewer's eyes to some areas of the drawing. Selecting a source light and applying the correct shades will enable you to highlight key parts of your design. Keep in mind that colour, lighting and shadows are only part of the story. Make the choices that will enhance rather than detract from your narrative. Carry out colour tests to see which ones work best.

Photoshop

COMPOSE AN ANIME STREET SCENE

Tan Hui Tian uses colouring, lighting and perspective techniques to paint an urban setting that's full of details



Artist PROFILE

Tan Hui Tian
LOCATION: Singapore

Tan is a senior illustrator at Collateral Damage Studios. She's created the key visuals for conventions such as Anime-Fest @ New York Comic Con and STGCC's 10th year anniversary. <https://ifm.sg/t-h-tian>



Traditional anime backgrounds are painted with poster paints, but increasingly studios are switching to digital tools. Backgrounds are designed to suit the cel-shaded animation in the foreground, and differ from matte-painted backgrounds created for films in that

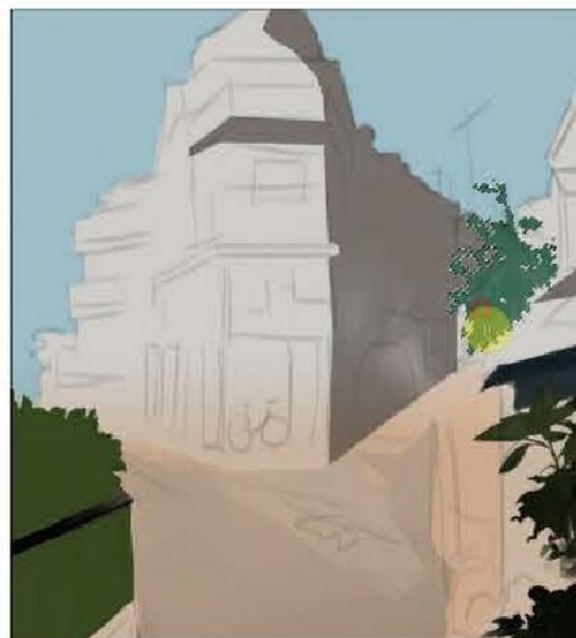
there are more hand-painted elements, and the colours are more saturated.

For this workshop I'll be describing my process for creating an anime-style background. It would be good if you had an awareness of basic perspective concepts, such as how to set up a simple two-point perspective grid.



1 Compositional sketch

I start off by searching for inspiration on Pinterest, searching online and going through my reference folders. I decide to do a common scene in anime: a quiet street in daylight. I have a rough composition in mind, and sketch it out with a simple brush. At this stage, I have a two-point perspective in mind, but choose not to use a perspective grid yet, so that the sketch can be more dynamic.

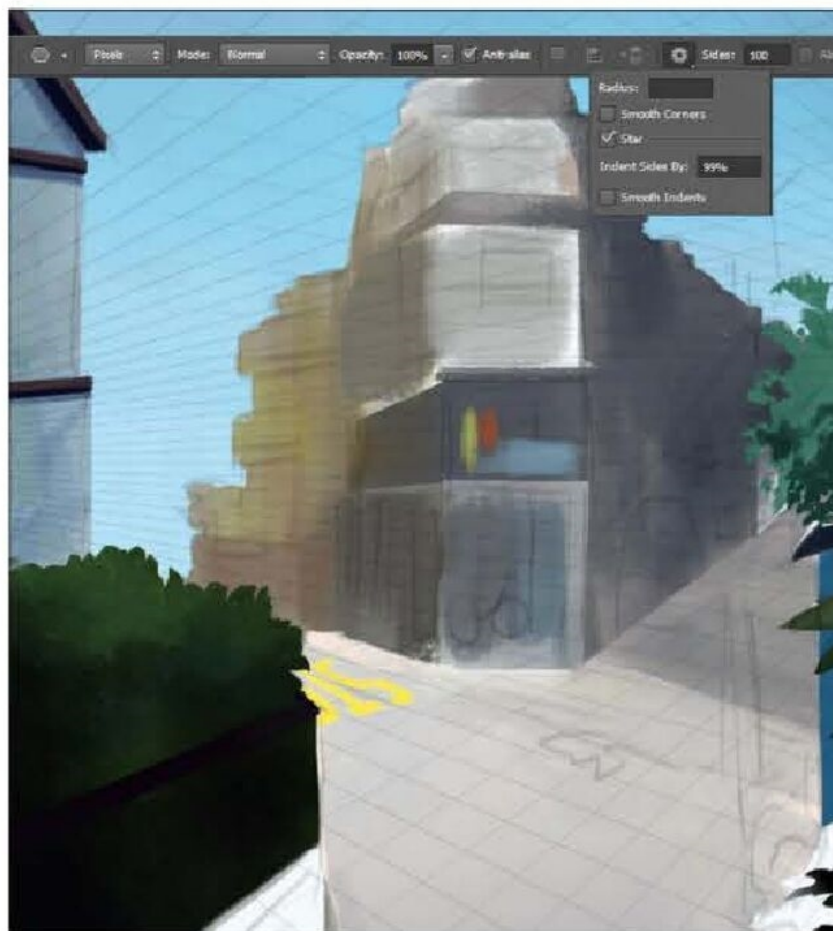


2 Moving on to colour flats

I then lay down colour flats in different layers. I often merge components that aren't touching into a single layer, to reduce the layer count. I use the Lasso and Paint Bucket tools to create the shapes. At this stage there's no need for all the shapes to be precise. It's more important to create tonal contrasts and interesting shapes. ➤➤

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See page 8 now!





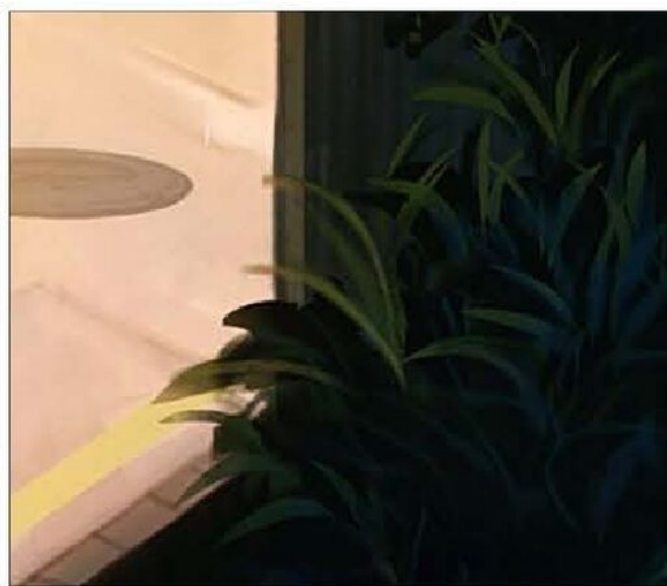
3 Working to the correct perspective

Once I have the shapes more or less pinned down, I then correct them according to the perspective grid. You can create a perspective grid with the Filter>Vanishing Point tool in Photoshop. For this, I use the Polygon Tool on the Star setting with 100 sides and 99 per cent indented sides.



4 Generate a rough sketch

In the areas that are unresolved, I draw rough guideline of the shapes that I want on another layer. I find it easier to refine the shapes afterwards, rather than drawing precise lines. If the art direction is more line-based then I spend more time refining the undersketch before moving on to the inking stage.



5 Refining shapes without over-rendering

When rendering, I find references of the real-world object and simplify that in my artwork. I try to work on the detail without zooming in too much, and finish the overall shading first. For the greenery, a lot of it is suggested so there's no need to over-render it. I skip around from component to component a lot during this stage, so that I'm not tempted to spend too much time on one particular element.



6 Overlay lighting

A good trick for creating visual interest through lighting is to play around with the tonal contrasts. James Gurney's explanation of the Windmill Principle (<https://ifxm.ag/jg-windmill>) helped me a lot. I decide to have the cast shadow cut across the hedge in foreground left. I use brushes on Dodge and Overlay modes to quickly create the backlit effect on the hedge.



7 Blending details

I add decals quickly by using the Type or Shapes tool, rasterising the result and then blending it into the artwork. Make sure that the decal is of the correct tonal value and saturation. If necessary, I colour-correct using the Hue & Saturation or Curves tools. I then add a weathering effect by using a textured eraser.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES:
SOFT ROUND

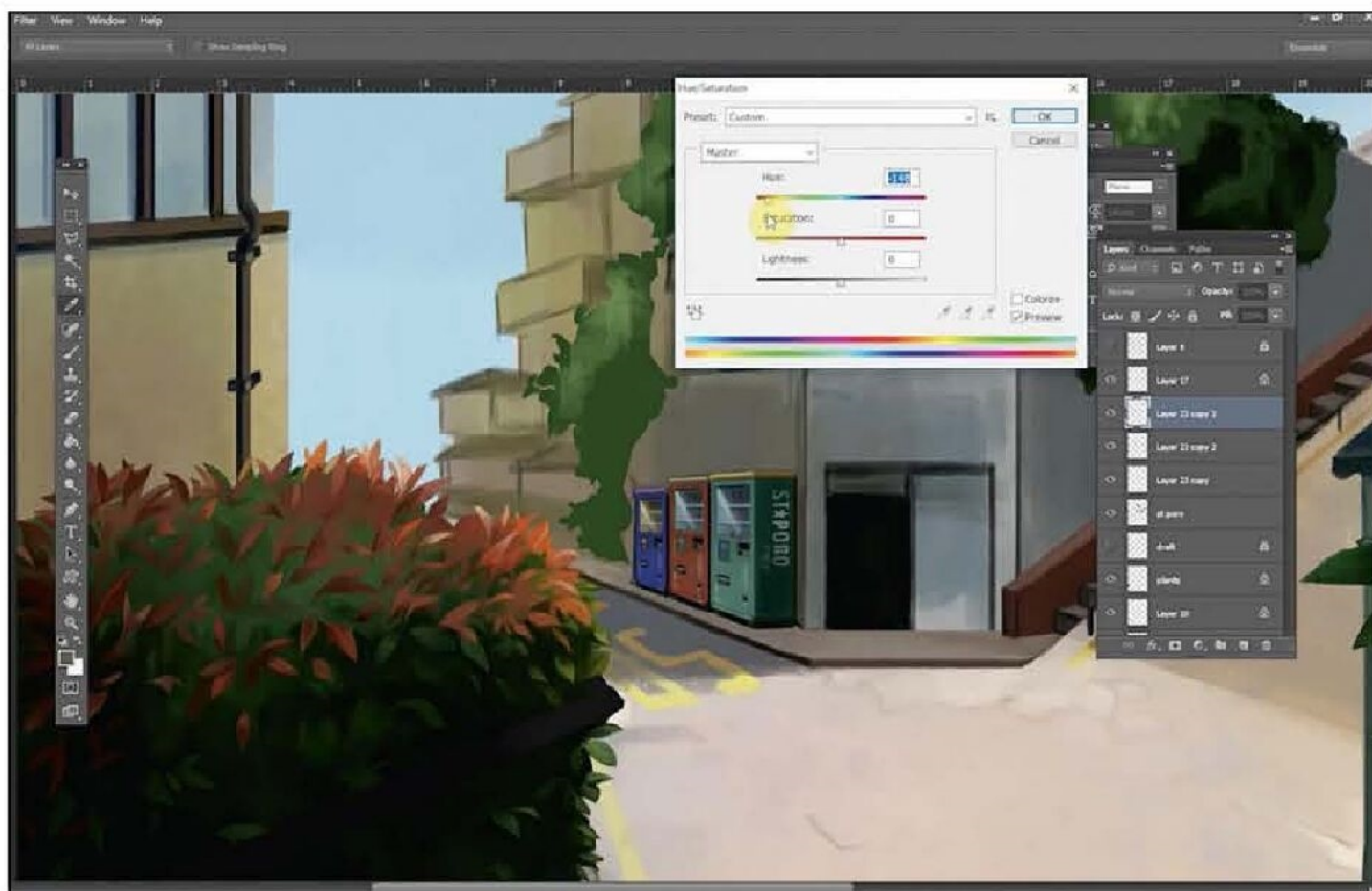
After the block-in phase I use this brush for painting soft glow effects or soft edges.

HARD SQUARE

My go-to brush for the painting process. The texture imparts a nice hand-painted feel.

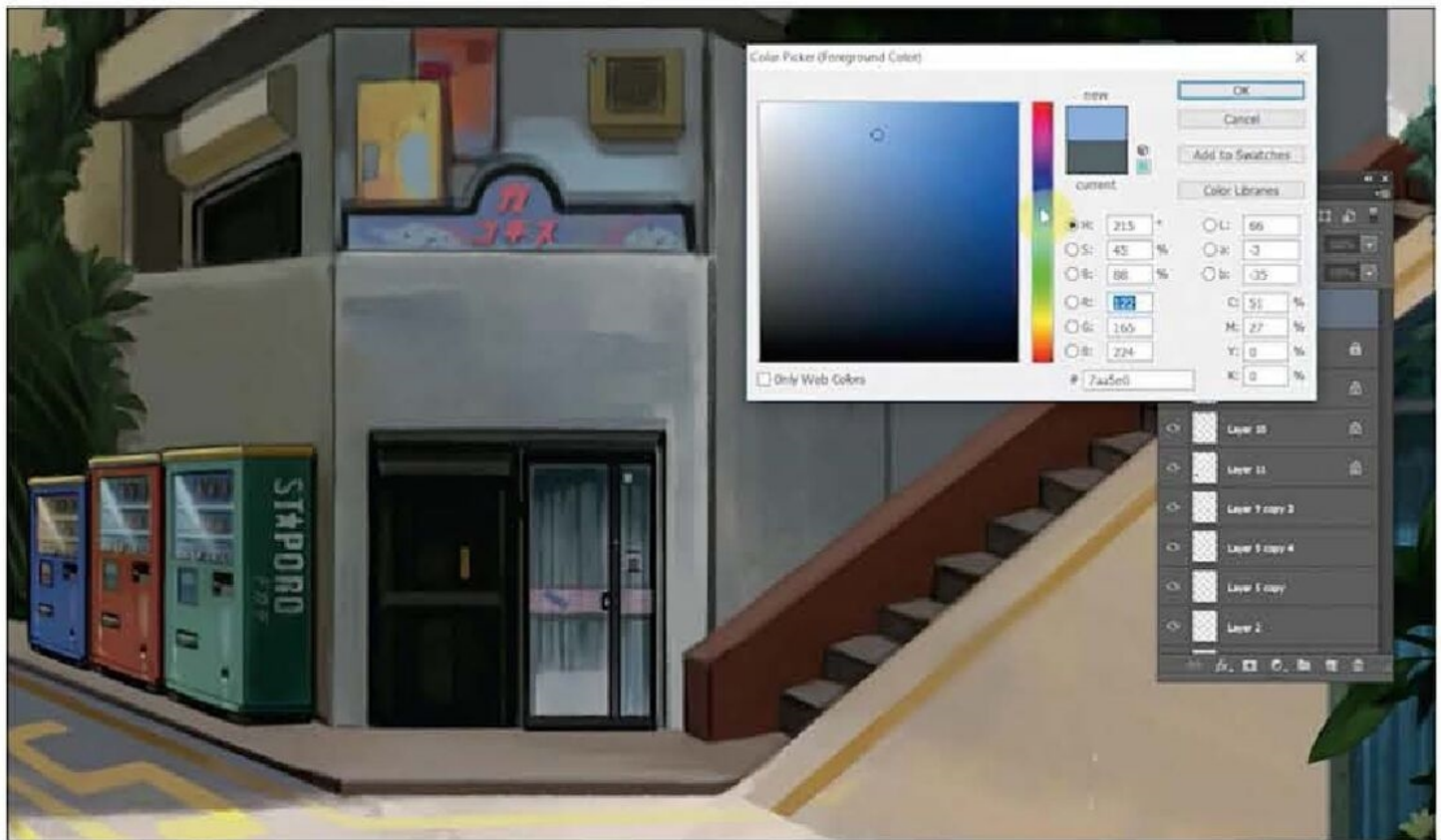
COLOR RANDOMIZER

Handy whenever I need to add in a little bit of colour randomisation at the start of rendering.



8 Replicating details in the environment

It makes sense to save time by duplicating items that are repeated around the scene. If the item isn't meant to be a perfect clone, I might change it to a different hue or edit certain details. I use the same trick to create the hand-painted brick tiles. ➡



9 Colour picking to create cohesiveness

I didn't have a colour palette in mind when I began this piece, but I want to create a cheery atmosphere. To create cohesiveness between the different colours, I use the Color Picker to select colours from other parts of the image, and have spots of colours distributed throughout.



10 Putting the wall mural into perspective

I use the Perspective Warp tool to warp the mural design on to the wall. I like to keep my Move Tool on auto-select, with the transform controls visible. This means that there's one fewer step involved in transforming any layer object. I can also switch between layers easily, and quite often don't have to worry about naming my layers. To transform a layer object manually, go to Edit>Free Transform.



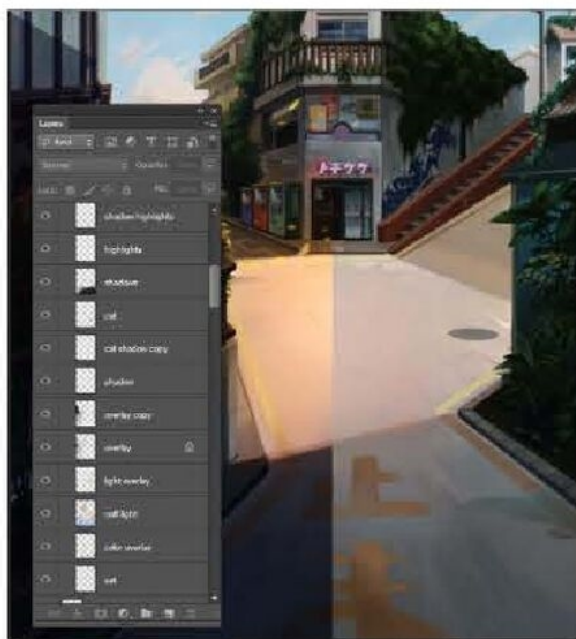
11 Objects in perspective

I don't really use the perspective grid because I find that I play by the rules too much when it's visible. However, it's often necessary to refer to it for equally spaced objects. You can use this trick when you need to find out the distance between equally spaced objects in perspective. The zig-zag lines will always be parallel to their corresponding lines (zig to zig, zag to zag).



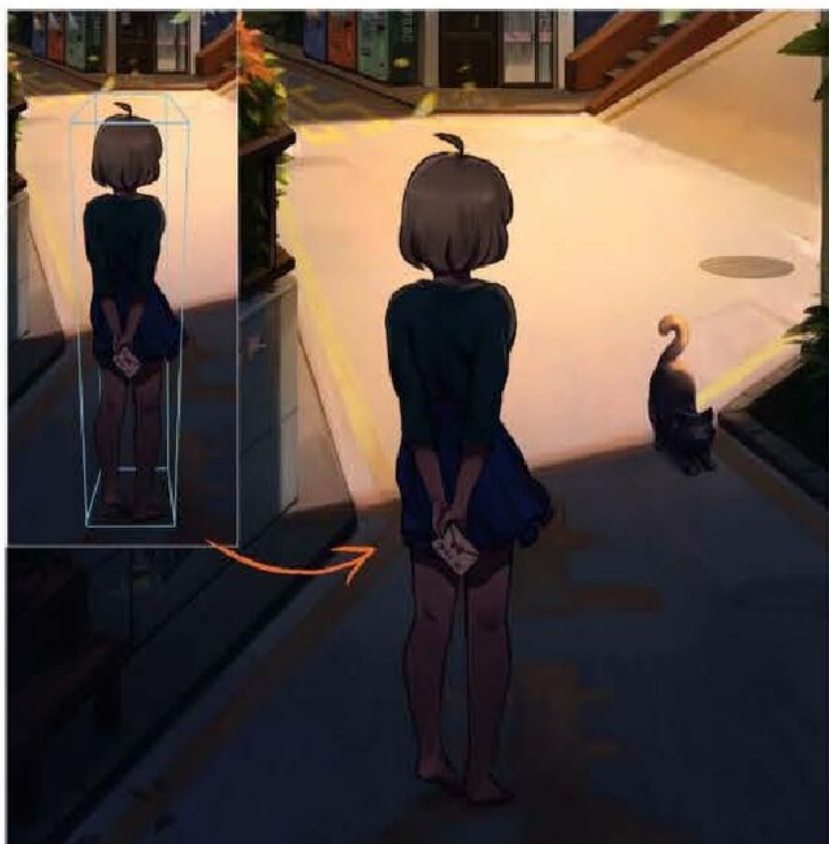
12 Adding visual interest

This is the fun part for me. I add little quirky details into the environment such as graffiti, animals, signs and posters. I often add my Space Penguin mascot into the artwork somewhere, and other little insider jokes.



13 Bringing the colour together

Colour adjustment layers tie the disparate colours together. I'm using a lot of layers on different blending modes, but the most important ones are the textured brush shape on Multiply mode (for the cast shadow), and the layers with soft Airbrush blobs on Soft light and Color mode that enhances the sunlight and blue shadows. I also make other adjustments, such as adding atmospheric fog or increasing the saturation on the shadow of the clouds. To make sure the layer adjustments don't muddy the colours beneath, I set the layers to Normal, 100 per cent Opacity and refine the shapes as needed.



14 Adding a character

When adding in figures into a finished environment, I consider the perspective before blocking them in. Here, I render the young woman in neutral lighting, and then adjust the colours with the Curves tool. I place the character layer under some of the colour adjustments layer, ensuring that the colours appear more cohesive.

Next month

Marvel Studios
artist Anthony
Francisco talks
Groot and Black
Panther art!



Next month

Next month in...
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

Film art masterclass!

Discover how your favourite film artists draw and paint for the big screen in our next issue!

All this... and more!

***A galaxy of
great sketches***

Senior Lucasfilm concept artist Jama Jurabaev shows us his artwork.

***Artist in
Residence***

Explore the studio of veteran film costume artist Darrell Warner.

***Mike Hill
interview***

The designer from Blade Runner 2049 gives his take on the film industry.

***Paint a classic
film character***

Kevin McGivern illustrates the icon of all sci-fi icons: Ellen Ripley.



ISSUE 173 ON SALE IN THE UK *Friday 22 March*

Figure drawing: part 6

ILLUSTRATE THE ARM AND HAND

Patrick J Jones studies the tricky subject of arm and hand anatomy as it rotates, while discussing the three hells of drawing

Artist PROFILE

Patrick J Jones
LOCATION: Australia

Patrick is a figurative artist, author and teacher. His art technique books, *The Anatomy of Style* and *The Sci-fi & Fantasy Techniques of Patrick J. Jones* were both award-winning best sellers. His next book on drawing the figure, *Figures from Life*, is now on sale. www.pjartworks.com

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See page 8 now!



It's the sixth part of my anatomy series, and this month we'll be studying the arm, particularly the twisting (pronated) forearm.

The arms, if drawn gesturally, can have a rhythmic appearance. If the gesture of the anatomy isn't taken into consideration then they can look stiff due to their structural up-and-down hinge movement. The hinge joint is the elbow of the lower arm's ulna bone fitting into the spanner-like condyles of the upper arm's humerus bone.

GET INTO THE RHYTHM

I recently taught a workshop that covered the most structural part of the body: the head. The students were surprised to learn that it's possible to illustrate the gesture of the head by following the rhythmic nature of muscle and flesh.

During the class I distilled the essence of drawing structure with style into three simple stages: find the gesture; lay in the structure; and ride the rhythms. These three stages constitute a lifetime of study. In study



On my recording workstation you can see an anatomical arm from master anatomist, Andrew Cawrse, and some body-builder photos.

we enter the realm of the humble by acknowledging there's more to learn.

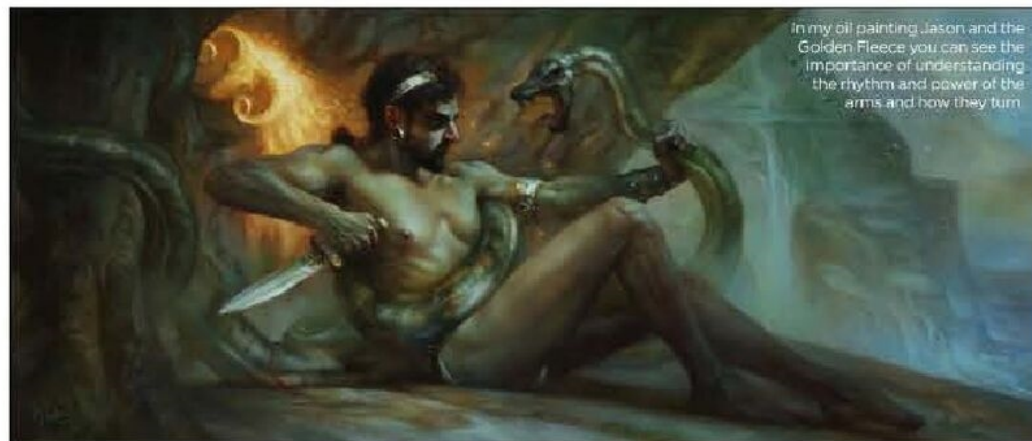
Although I teach my own online workshops, at www.pjartworks.com and at CGMA, I'm also a lifetime member of The New Master's Academy. It's here that I study anatomy models and artists who I admire, including Steve Huston and Glenn Vilppu, as they talk about the philosophy of art while drawing. One

artist in particular, Danny Galieote, is a marvel to watch when drawing rhythm. My point here is that we should never cease the process of studying, even when we're well into our professional career.

THE THREE HELLS

Gesture, structure and render are everything we need to create heavenly drawings, but these three components can be hellish if unbalanced. When we rely on gesture too much our figure drawings become floppy and boneless. This is gesture hell. And if we rely on structure too much our drawings become wooden and stiff – welcome to structure hell. If we use render to hide poor gesture or structure then our drawings will look laboured and dull. This is the worst hell. We're all sinners at one point or another...

Check the study sheet at the end for anatomy landmarks and proportions as you go, but for now let's get drawing that arm. ➤➤

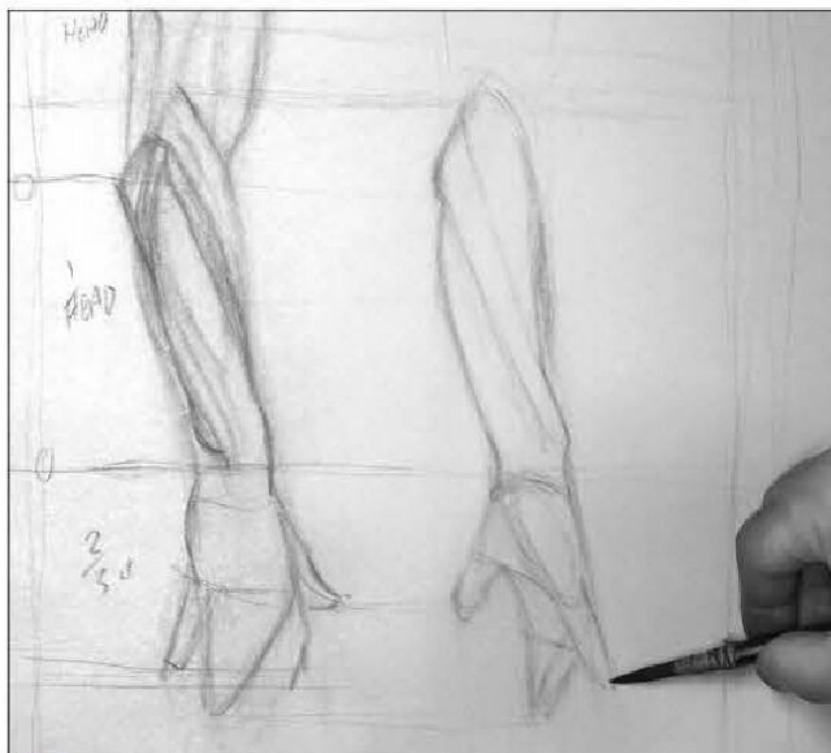


In my oil painting Jason and the Golden Fleece you can see the importance of understanding the rhythm and power of the arms and how they turn.



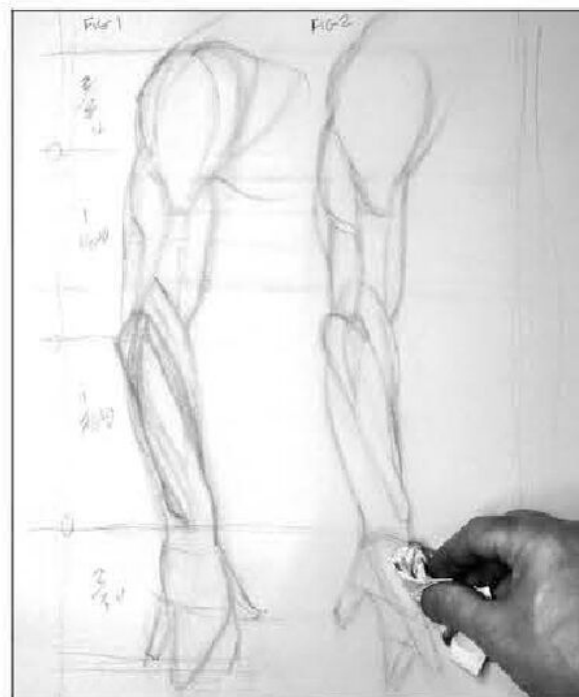
**MISSED
AN ISSUE?**

Turn to **page 44** to complete your collection of Patrick's figure-drawing workshops. They're essential reading for all artists!



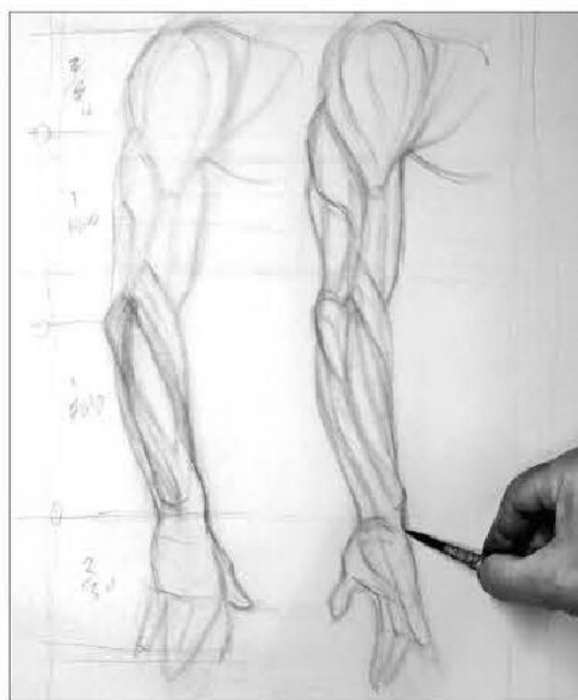
1 Follow the twist

Looking at the twisted arm study (right), you can see how the straighter arm study (left) was started with broad gestural shapes, from the large deltoid top to narrower wrist at the bottom. This is gesture heaven. Note how much twist the wrist is capable of by following the ulna (elbow) bone.



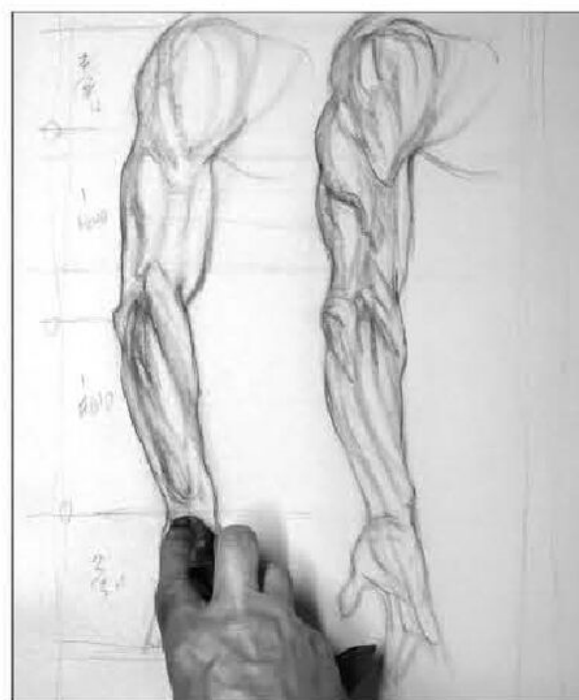
2 Develop a good plot

Having plotted out the basic structural shapes, based on simple anatomy, I wipe the drawing back to a ghost form with tissue. This creates a faded road map for me to articulate the more sophisticated lines and tones to follow. I add proportional head-size based divisions to help control the length.



3 The importance of staying sharp

I keep my pencil lead long and sharp, which helps keep my lines long, gestural and accurate. With the faded structure lines underneath I have the confidence to make each line more gestural and fluid on top. This also gives me the chance to improve the anatomy with every stroke.



4 The bunching of muscles

I lay in some forms with the pencil edge, then soften the forms broadly with a shammy leather cloth to create an early feel for the softness of flesh. Notice in the right-hand drawing how the muscles are bunching upward due to the twist and flex of the forearm.

WORKSHOP MATERIALS

PENCIL

General's soft charcoal pencil, Pitt charcoal pencil

CHARCOAL

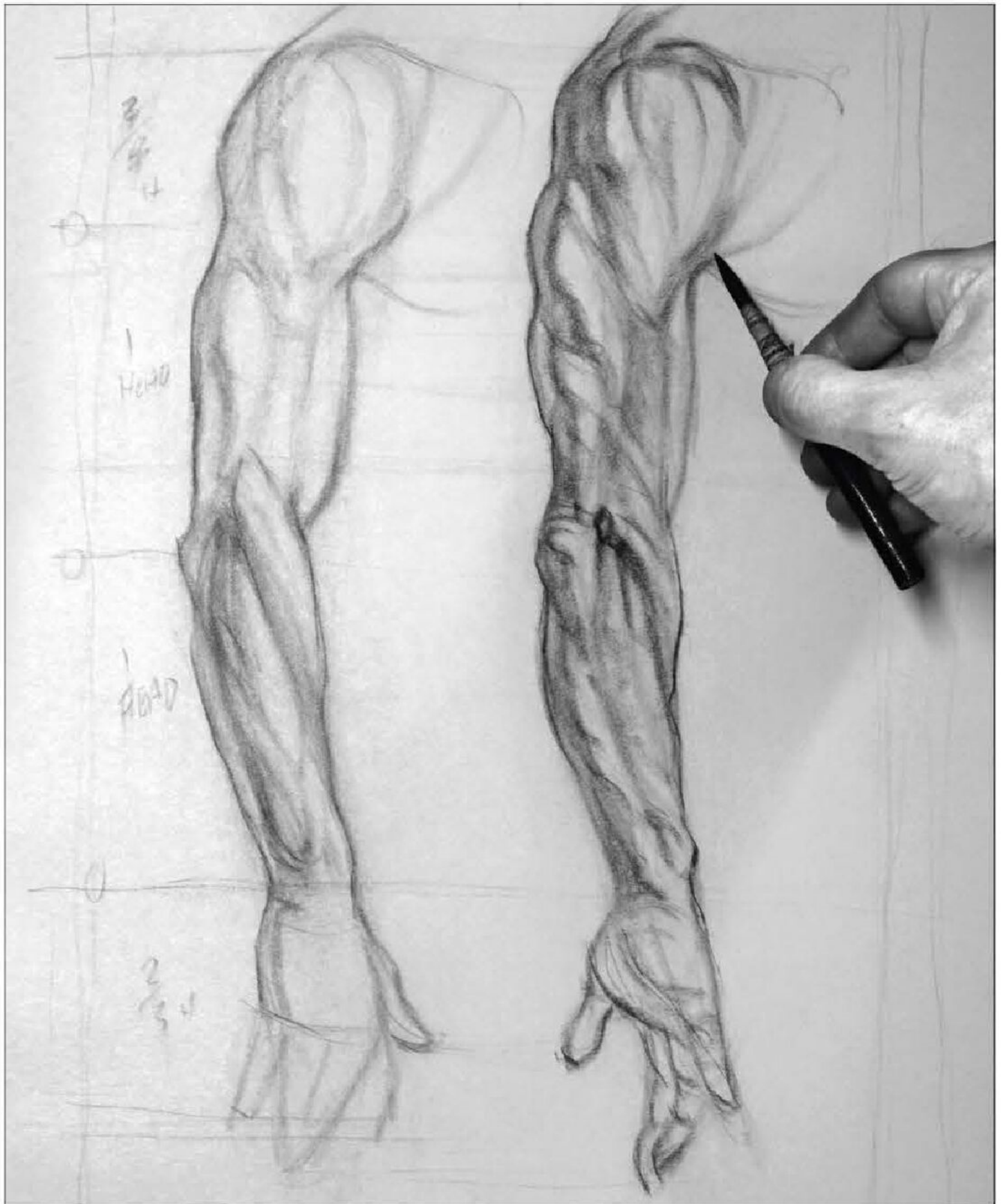
General's compressed charcoal sticks

ERASERS

Kneadable eraser, mono eraser, electric eraser, pencil eraser, grip eraser

MISCELLANEOUS

Paper stumps, tissue paper, washed and dried shammy leather cloth, newsprint



5 Keep in mind the hierarchy of muscles

Here the study begins in earnest. At this point I'm overlapping the pectoralis muscle across the biceps, but under the twisting deltoids. Knowing the hierarchy of muscles helps me understand depth and form. "The deltoid is king" is a good phrase to remember for the arm. ➤



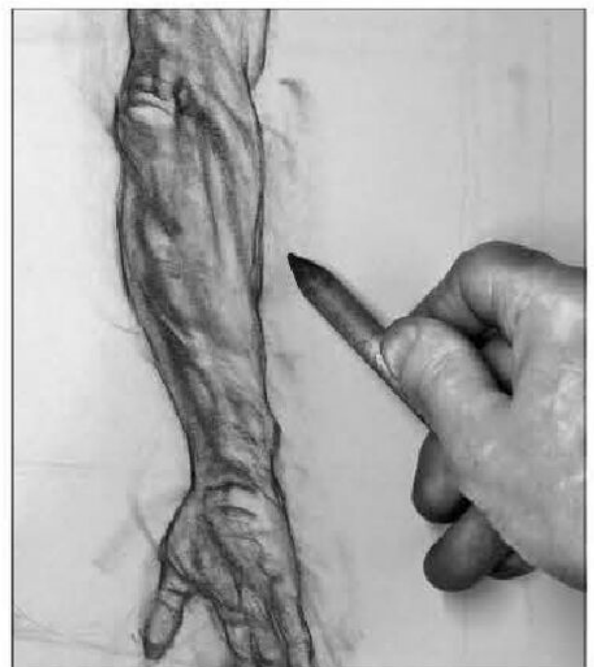
6 How to get ahead in anatomy studies

Here I seize the chance to draw some digits in detail – a luxury that life-drawing classes don't always have time for. To sight the length of a hand I compare the bottom of the nose to the top of the head. I also use a measurement of three-and-one-third heads from shoulder to fingertips.



7 Capture the twisting of arm muscles

Now I work on both arm studies at once, going back and forth as I shade the curved forms. Doing this helps us understand the twisting and bunching of fibrous muscle as the arm turns. At this point we are in gesture and structural heaven. Considered study has kept us from falling into both gestural and structural hell.



8 Stay out of render hell

I use a paper stump to blend and render tone. This is a dangerous place as we can easily screw up our solid structure by over-blending and softening the edges so much that we slowly change the form without noticing. This is what I mean by render hell. Of the three hells, this is the most fearful and destructive.



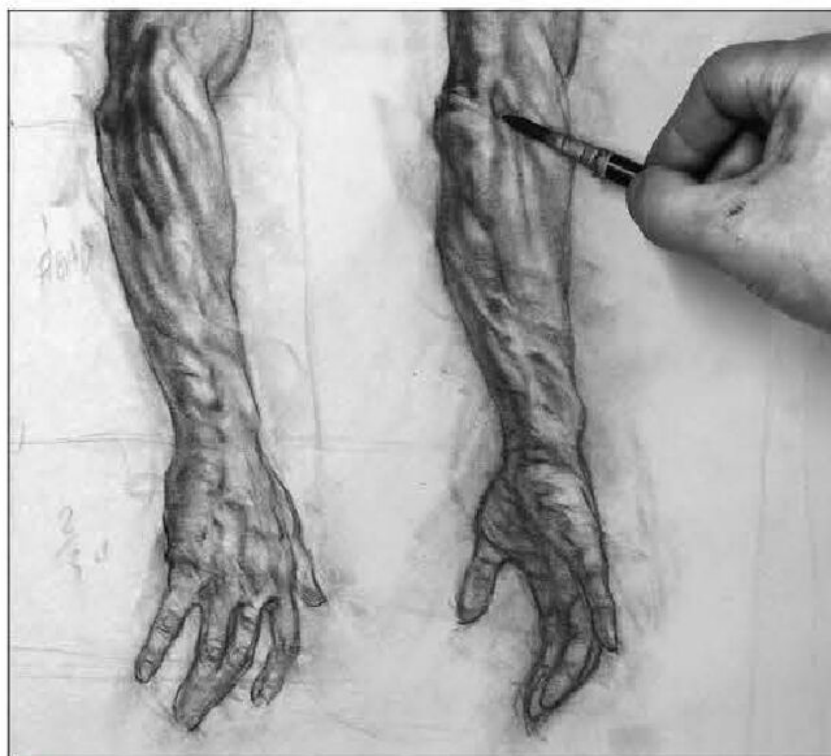
9 There's sorcery afoot

Here are the bones that live under the muscles. The white dots indicate where they meet the surface. The main sorcery to note is how the flat-ended radius bone has twisted across the ulna bone to bring the thumb to the back, while pulling the forearm muscles with it.



10 The ball and socket

While the forearm is doing most of the turning the humerus bone of the upper arm follows to a lesser degree as it rotates inside the shoulder and twists the deltoid. The rotation occurs via the ball and socket joint-connection of the scapula called the glenoid process. ➡➡



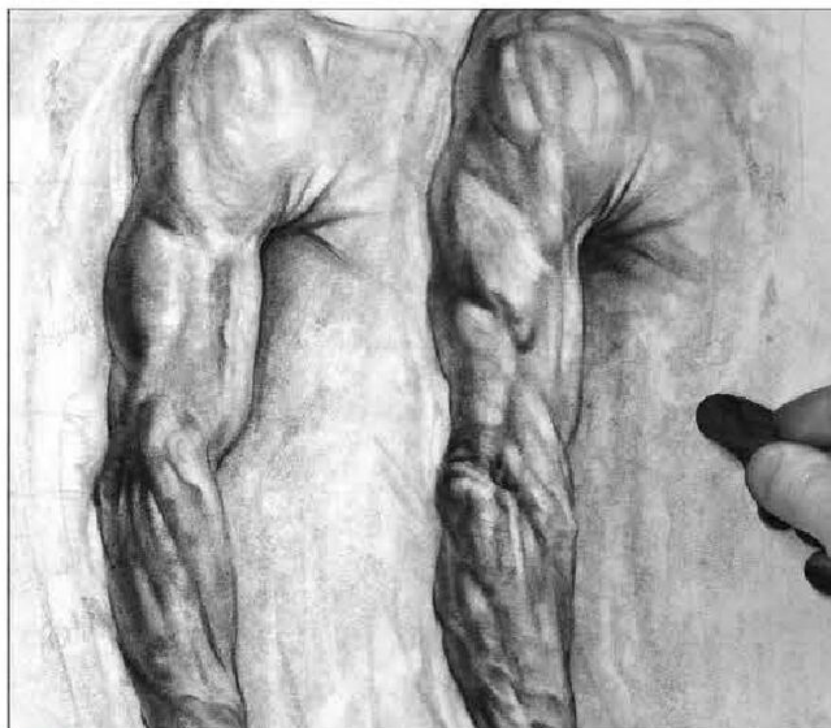
11 Don't sweat the small stuff

The other problem with render hell is that we tend to focus on the small stuff and lose sight of the big picture. To avoid the stiff quality of slow-cooked render hell I render gesturally, following the form with pendulum-like rhythmic strokes, moving back and forth, all the way down the arm.



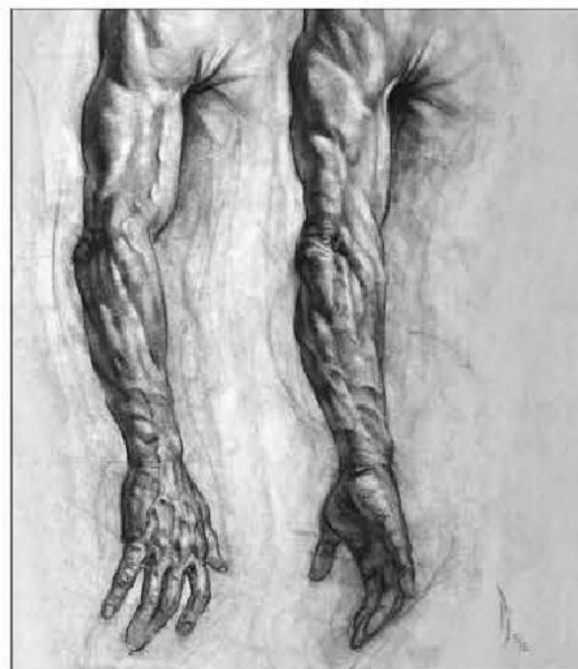
12 Blurred lines

Here I'm using a pencil eraser to 'draw' the highlights. It's worth noting that I rarely use erasers to erase errors. I prefer to fade lines with tissue and keep drawing. If I make an error that requires major erasing, I find it's simply better to start again with fresh rhythm.



13 Popping the highlights

Using charcoal and tissue I smudge and rub into the background to provide a grey tone that visually 'pops' the highlights of the flesh by providing contrast. For softer highlights I use a kneadable eraser, moving down the arm as before, swaying in rhythm, always drawing, and moving it side to side.



14 Nobody's perfect...

With all the hells avoided we end with a study that is neither too gesturally floppy nor too structurally stiff. Proud of myself, I self-indulge in a bit of needless render, adding tiny details such as wrinkles and veins. Yes, I've creaked open the sinful doors to render hell again, but hey, nobody's perfect.

THE ANATOMY OF STYLE ARM PRONATION STUDY SHEET

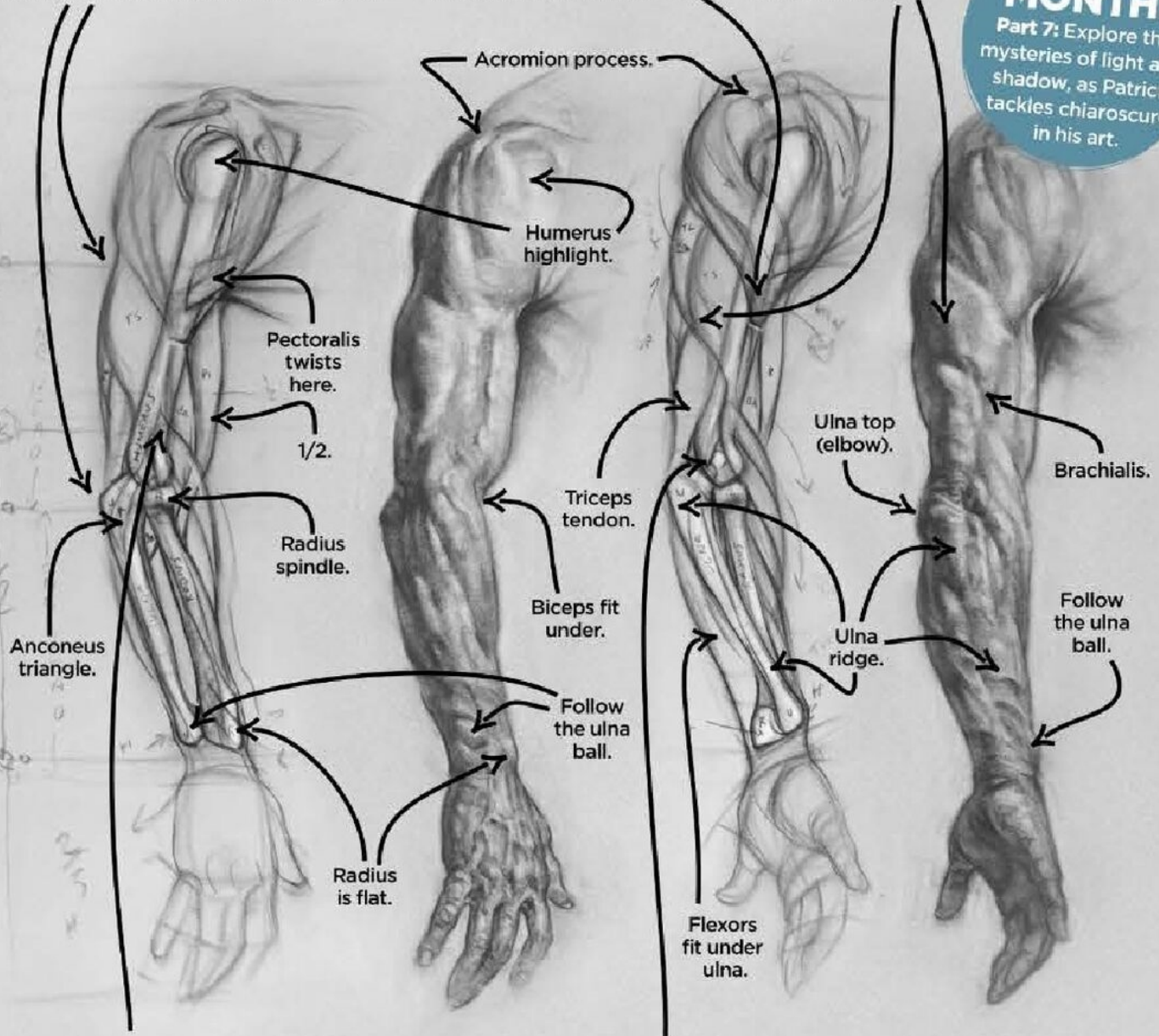
Measure one basic head length from the triceps/ biceps tops down to the ulna elbow, then one head down to the wrist.

Study the infra drawings to see how the twisting bones turn the muscles.

Triceps shorten when flexed. Note the rhythm with the deltoid.

NEXT MONTH!

Part 7: Explore the mysteries of light and shadow, as Patrick tackles chiaroscuro in his art.



Bulge of brachioradialis marks one half-length from shoulder to wrist.

The forearm extensor muscles grab around the humerus bone to create a dimple. This is the bone landmark from which the forearm muscles show their twist.

15 The pronated arm study sheet

When the palm is up the hand position is known as supination. When the palm is down, it's called pronation. With pronation we turn the thumb toward our body, twisting the muscles attached to the radius bone across the ulna bone, much like a bunched-up towel. A good ballpark length of the arm from shoulder to fingertips is three-

and-one-third heads. Note that although it's the flat radius bone on the thumb side that twists over the ulna, it's easier to see the ball shape of the ulna on the wrist. Just follow the ulna. You can also see that biceps attach to the radius, while the brachialis under the biceps attaches to the ulna. Finally, the Ulna bone is the landmark that divides the extensors on the top of the arm from the flexors under the arm.

Procreate CREATE YOUR OWN ASUKA



Learn how **Paul Kwon** (aka Zeronis) interprets a character from Neon Genesis Evangelion

Artist PROFILE

Paul Kwon
LOCATION: US

Paul is a concept artist and illustrator. He started his career as an intern at Blizzard Entertainment, before securing a full-time job at the company. He's now a senior concept artist at Riot Games. In his spare time he works on his own Deathverse project. <https://fxm.ag/paul-k>

**GET YOUR
RESOURCES**

See page 8 now!



Creating character designs for living is a dream come true, especially when working on League of

Legends. The game is chock-full of diverse and over-the-top fantasy characters, and imagining them in a completely different alternative universe is even more thrilling. That's sums up my job at Riot Games as a character concept artist developing new skins for the players.

In my spare time, I try to soak up trending visual references and expand my mental library as much as

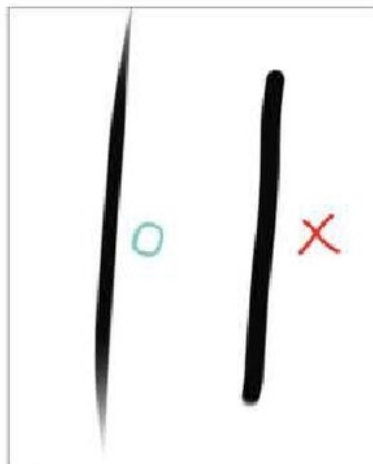
possible. From looking at amazing photographs to watching videos that tell compelling stories, to studying anime characters, mobile phone games, and of course browsing through amazing illustration and concept art online. After work, I wind down by painting fan art of characters that are either trending or are genuinely iconic in nature.

For this workshop, I'm subtly reinterpreting Asuka from the Neon Genesis Evangelion franchise, and give her a bit of an anime twist. I'll be using Procreate on my iPad Pro – I love this creative combo!



1 Keeping things light while sketching

To start I keep the Opacity of the default Round brush pretty light to help me see where I put down the brush strokes and how they will establish the direction of the whole image. Indeed, I try to imagine what the figure will look like before putting down any strokes. This is an important skill to learn and is something that I still struggle with. I believe that comic book or manga artists are trained to do this, so this is worth bearing in mind if this is your career goal.



2 Using your finger

The stroke on the left is the result of using my finger with the default Round brush. Notice the varying shape of the stroke. The Streamline brush setting keeps the strokes clean and steady, much like using a lazy mouse setting. Oddly, I can't replicate this stroke using the stylus with Pen Pressure active (right). It took time to work freely this way, but now it feels natural. I'll be using my finger to paint Asuka. ➡

In depth Create Asuka



3 Clean line art

This is mid-way through the sketch process. In the dark bold lines and ambient occlusion areas you can see the effect of the Brush pen and its distinctive brush stroke. I have to be careful about not adding too many stroke for the hair, otherwise it starts to look unnatural. I recommend regularly flipping the image during these early stages, looking for errors. It's easier to correct them now rather than later on in the painting process.



WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PROCREATE

CUSTOM BRUSHES: BRUSH PEN

I love this brush, especially without using the stylus. It creates the perfect sharp shape.

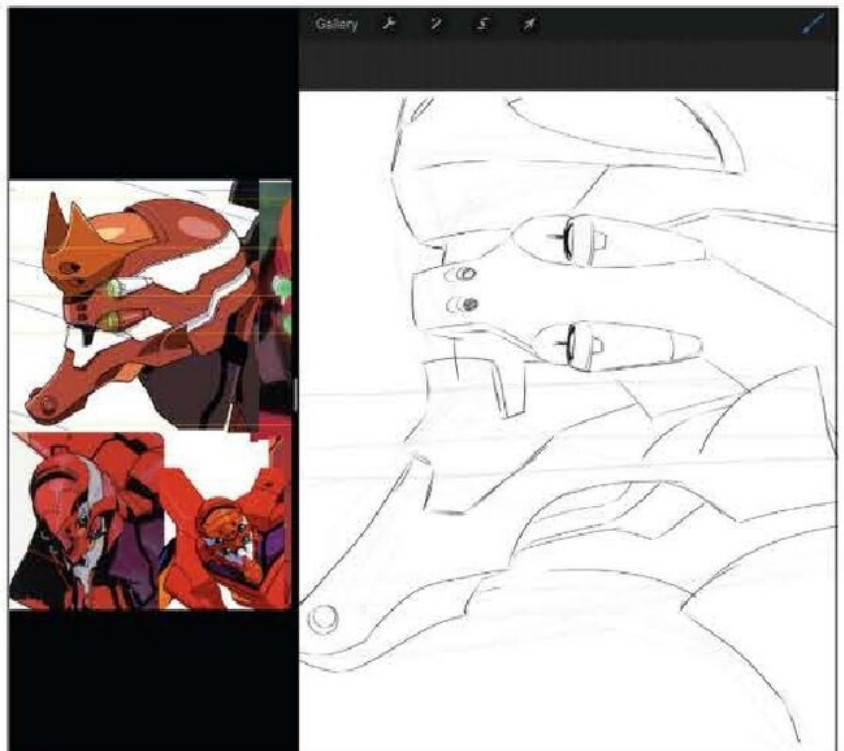
TECHNICAL PEN

I use the Technical Pen with the StreamLine setting at a mid-value for going over my lines.



4 Masking techniques

I use the Magic Wand equivalent tool in Procreate to select around the character, then I invert this selection to isolate the character. Next, I mask off specific parts of the character: her hair, suit, gloves, eyes and skin. This makes it possible to apply a consistent colouring technique to the image, and enables your unique painting style to come to the fore.



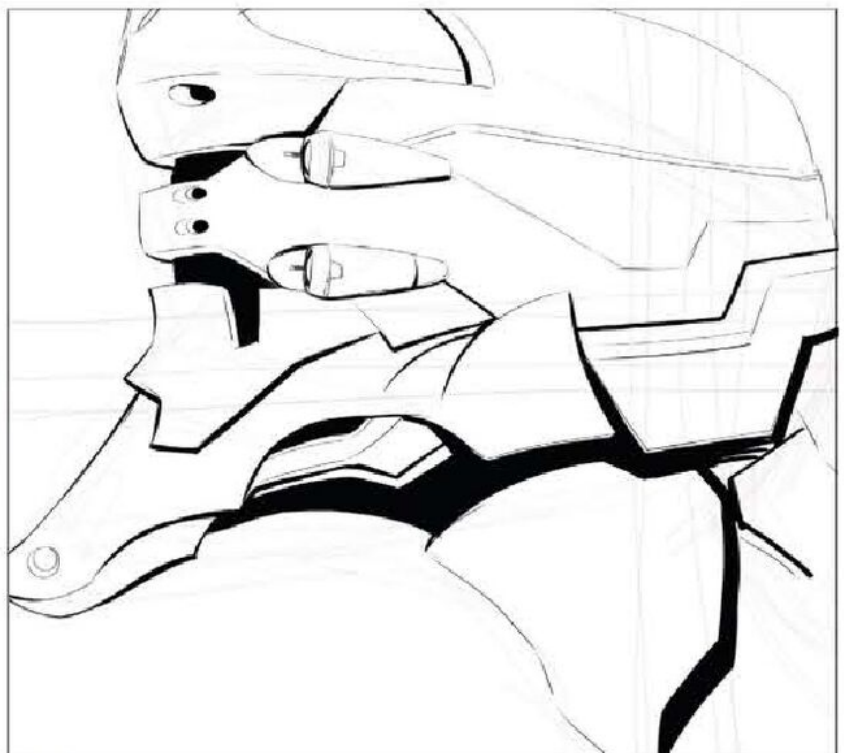
5 Customise the iPad workspace

Here, I've split the screen to display reference material right next to the art work – pretty handy, eh? I have reference open at all times from artworks that I've saved on to my iPad and iPhone, or from Pinterest. I also have Netflix minimised in the corner for background noise or just for listening to music.



6 Starting on the background

I'm adding the Evangelion Unit in the background to create more visual interest and contrast. I roughly put down strokes to create its overall composition and look, before committing to clean line art. I think it's good practice to work on the entire image at a steady pace.



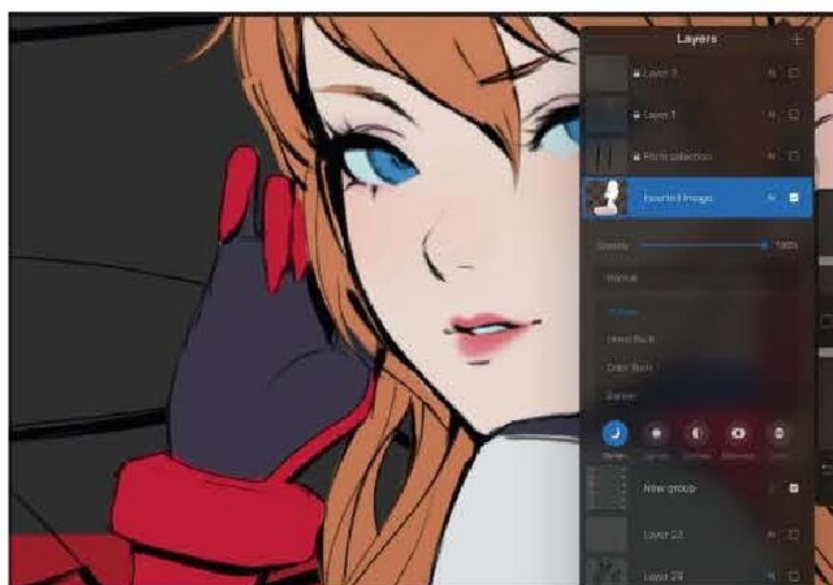
7 Simple yet powerful graphic shape

Using the same Brush pen, I'm focusing on making the Eva Unit's head clear and graphically engaging. This is because its purpose is to act as a tertiary element to keep the viewer within the scene. >>



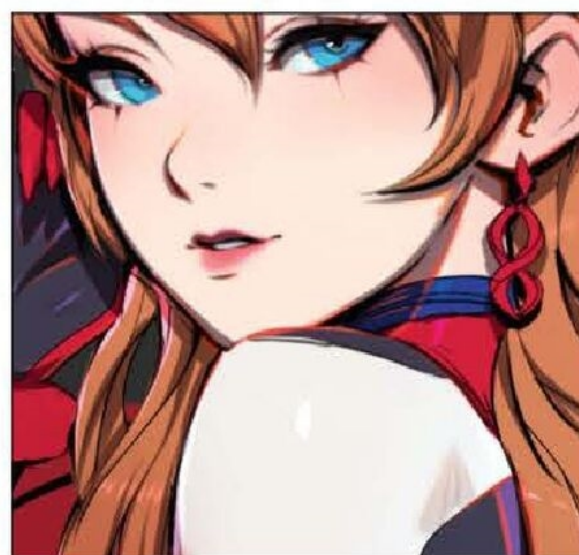
8 Accentuate the composition

I'm exploring this composition approach, where the focal point is around the pilot's face and upper half of her body. The cross shape acts as the secondary interest behind the pilot, while Eva Unit becomes the tertiary background element blending gently into the red background.



9 Use a Multiply layer for shadows

I place the original mask of the character above all the other layers and turn it to white. I swipe two fingers and flick the layer to the right, which layer masks it. I then change the layer type to Multiply. This enables me to add a subtle grey colour without it bleeding out of the character. This is a simple process that enables you to focus on one thing at a time and gradually build up consistent shadows.



10 Painting over my lines

After the shadows are painted over the character, I decide to experiment by adding some warm oranges over some lines, giving the character a stylised subsurface scattering appearance. This also enables me to blend the line art with the colours of the character. I'm happy with the results – it's good to try out new techniques!



11 An explosion of art

I add some explosion shapes, which I interpret and stylise in my own way. I want to emphasise the contrast here through shapes, size, value and colour.



12 Apply post-processing to the character

When the image is around 85 per cent finished, I turn my attention to post-processing. I use blurring, sharpening, duplicating and merging techniques, experiment with many different types of layer and adjust the Opacity. I don't want to overdo the processing. The idea is to harmonise the values and colours, and help the image have the correct balance and pop in the focal areas. I'm trying to make Asuka blend in with the rest of the image naturally.



13 Background details

I decide to add a little more subtle details on the red background by painting in some red cloud and smoke shapes using Procreate's default Smoke brush. I also carefully apply the noise filter on many parts of the image to generate extra depth without it becoming a distraction.



14 Running a final polish pass over the image

This is near final and I'm happy with how the painting's turned out. I add a lot of vignette steps to redirect the focal point to her face and upper torso. I carry out a little more colour balancing using a combination of Screen, Lighten, Overlay, Color Dodge and Add layers, bringing more vibrancy to the image's colour and values. This also enables me to mask out the initial dark lines and blend everything more naturally. I also hit the edges of the character with the big soft Round brush, painting subtle rim lighting to add more three-dimensional forms to her. ■

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Reviews

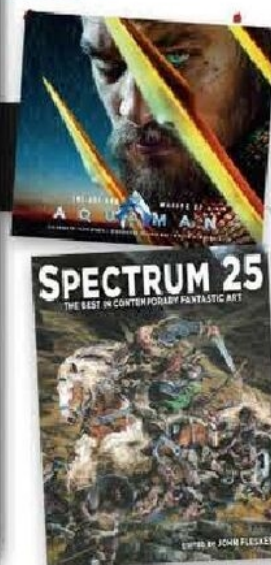


Artist's Choice Award

Art resources with a five-star rating receives the ImagineFX Artist's Choice award!

The latest art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team...

5
PRODUCTS
ON TEST



HARDWARE

92 Cintiq 16

The Cintiq 16 drops both the Pro designation and the price. Has Wacom removed key features to make this work?

TRAINING

97 Advanced Kitbashing for Environment Design

Concept artist Stephane Wootha Richard proves that all those hours you spent making things out of LEGO weren't wasted.

BOOKS

98 Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse

Discover how this film created a suitably experimental art style to tell its story.



99 Spectrum 25: The best in contemporary fantastic art

Look back on a year in imaginative art with this collection of leading creators.

99 The Art and Making of Aquaman

Visit the imaginatively designed watery world of DC's latest superhero film.



RATINGS EXPLAINED ★★★★★ Magnificent ★★★★★ Great ★★★ Good ★★ Poor ★ Atrocious

We found the 15.6-inch screen to be bright enough for day-to-day working. It's brightness, contrast and colour temperature can be easily adjusted.



Cintiq 16

MAC
&
PC

STEP DOWN The Cintiq 16 drops both the Pro designation and the price. We find out if Wacom has stripped out key features to make this work

Price £530 **Company** Wacom **Web** www.wacom.com

There was a time when Wacom was the only real choice for artists wanting a graphic tablet or creative display, and its Cintiq range has always been a byword for quality – albeit at a price. Fast forward to today and there are numerous options to consider across a range of budgets. These include the relatively unknown Articul D13 right up to the Apple iPad Pro.

Wacom, wanting to regain the initiative, has released the Cintiq 16. It's clear the company is going after a specific market and the tablet's headline feature is the price, which is

less than half the cost of the device's Pro-monikered sibling. A 1,920x1,080 HD display, a supplied Pro Pen 2 and 72 per cent colour gamut are all fairly standard features, but there's also 8,192 levels of pressure sensitivity, the ability to use the newer Pro Pen 3D, and minimal parallax (the distance between your nib and your on-screen stroke).

MONEY TALKS

The price needs to be addressed before we look at anything else. The device costs £530, while the Cintiq Pro 16 is £1,400. The Cintiq 16's closest competitor is the Huion KAMVAS GT-156HD V2, which hovers around the

£450 mark. Although Wacom has its history and market dominance in its favour, the similar specs of the Cintiq 16 and Huion's model means artists will now want to consider all tablet options before making a purchase. That's very different from back in the day, when the choice was essentially a Wacom product costing either £450 or £1,400. It hardly needs pointing out that if a lot of artists can do without the pro-level features absent in this cheaper model, then Wacom may be eating into its own high-end market.

The display measures 15.6-inches diagonally and, similar to many of its competitors, has a full HD screen



Built-in storage for the stylus helps to keep workstation clutter down to a minimum.

“Rather than an etched glass screen, the Cintiq 16 has an anti-glare textured overlay”

resolution. It has a TFT LCD (IPS) and, rather than an etched glass screen, the Cintiq 16 has an anti-glare textured overlay. How artists get on with this screen will depend on how much they love that 'sliding on glass' experience, which comes with Wacom's Pro models and the iPad Pro.

It might not be as bright as the similar-sized Pro version, but it didn't feel like a problem under normal studio working conditions. The device has a colour gamut of 72 per cent as opposed to 94 per cent (or higher) as quoted for the Cintiq Pro and the Artisul D16. That's going to put a certain group of users off, such as pro photographers or those artists working at the higher end of the illustration market.

There are flip-out legs on the rear of the Cintiq and these enable you to work at a 19-degree angle. There's also a separate stand that you can buy for

£70. There are no express keys on this model, and Wacom doesn't include the Express Key remote, but it is compatible if you want to shell out £90 for the accessory.

SOLID STYLUS PERFORMANCE

There are no complaints on the stylus front. The Pro Pen 2 has always delivered on sensitivity and build quality. As with most pens in the Wacom family you don't have to charge them – something that can't be said for close competitors like the Huion KAMVAS and any of the Apple Pencils. Huion has said that it'll be

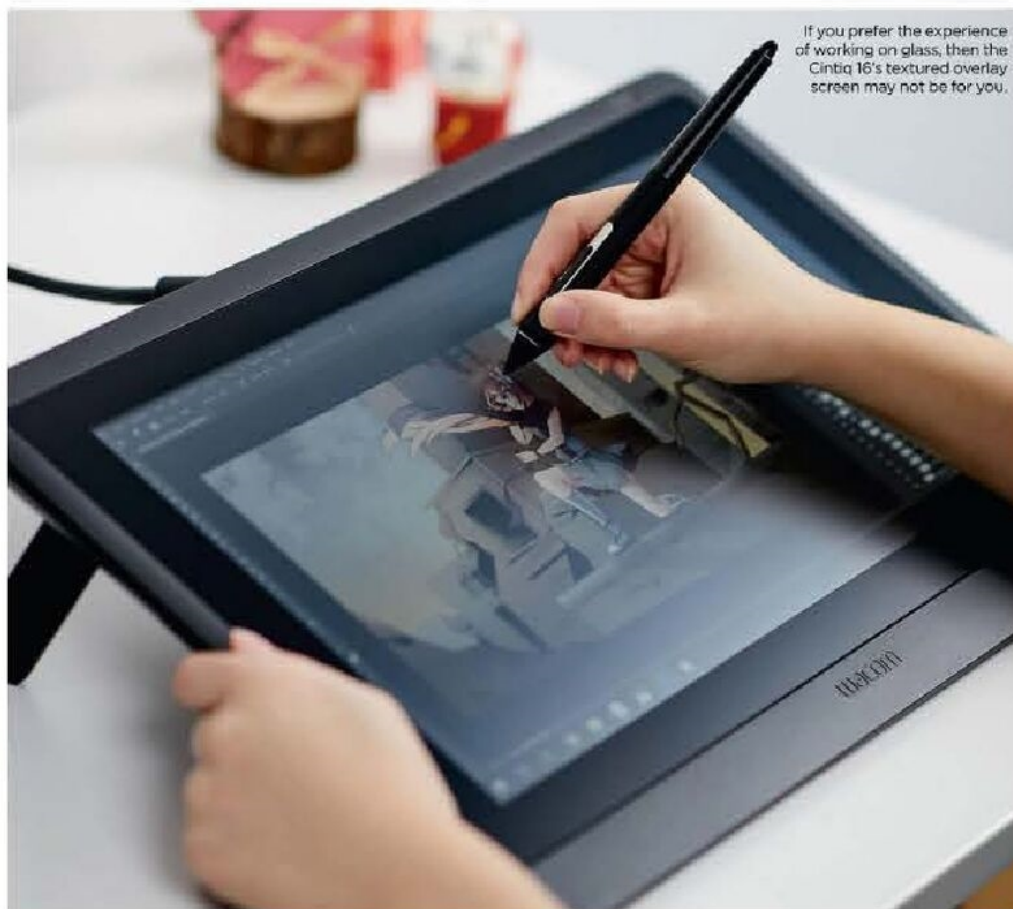
The Cintiq 16 features built-in legs that can be folded away, or you can purchase a stand separately for £70.

supplying two pens with its latest models, but a chargeless pen will always be the gold standard. If you do a lot of 3D modelling and find that an extra button on the stylus is a must, the Cintiq 16 is compatible with the Pro Pen 3D (sold separately at £90).

A slide-out pen holder on the right-hand side of the unit enables you to store spare nibs along with the tool to remove them from the Pro Pen. The stylus' 8,192 levels of sensitivity is the same as the Pro line and is now pretty much the norm. We've come a long way when 2,048 levels of sensitivity was the industry standard.

A single cord attaches to the top of the Cintiq 16 and this does make the whole workspace experience feel tidier, compared with products that utilise side cable connections. That single cable splits into a USB A, HDMI and power lead. If you have a newer laptop with USB C or even a machine with a Display Port then you're going to need an adaptor for the HDMI connection. A single power button lives on the top right of the screen, ➡





If you prefer the experience of working on glass, then the Cintiq 16's textured overlay screen may not be for you.

➔ keeping well out of the way of accidental button presses.

The Wacom Desktop Center makes it easy to adjust brightness, contrast and colour temperature without using on-device buttons. However, you aren't going to achieve the black levels of an etched glass tablet.

DON'T TOUCH

One noticeable feature that's been dropped for this model is touch-sensitivity. This may be a deal breaker for artists and photographers coming from an iPad. However, 3D sculptors using programs like ZBrush aren't going to be worried by the lack of touch. And while using a touch screen is great in Photoshop for zooming and rotating, it won't be an impediment for any artists entering the market.

The price leap for touch-sensitivity is huge if you choose to remain within the Wacom stable. Your alternative is to settle for a competitor and any associated issues that come with less-established manufacturers. Time will tell, but we don't think this is going to affect sales of Wacom's new device.

The release of the Cintiq 16 marks a new strategy from Wacom. This is the

“One noticeable features that's been dropped for this model is touch-sensitivity”

company's response to a growing number of tablet manufacturers entering the market. Let's be clear, though: this isn't a budget machine. Working with the Pro Pen 2 and its 8,192 level of sensitivity on a more-than-adequate screen make it an attractive option to artists wanting to upgrade their entry-level kit, and for those working at the lower end of the pro market. Lack of touch-sensitivity, no 4K, and a screen that's not etched glass are all going to be levelled as complaints, but unsurprisingly those features come with a price tag.

Overall, we'd suggest spending time using a product like this before committing, but we believe this is going to be a great strategy for Wacom in the long run. It'll be interesting to see if the company follows it up with a non Pro 22- or 24-inch model. Competition is a good thing and it's clear Wacom is tackling that challenge head-on. 🍷

DETAILS

Features

- 15.6-inch screen size
- 1,920x1,080 (full HD) screen resolution
- 8,192 pressure levels
- 9-Si Active Matrix TFT LCD (IPS) screen technology
- 72 per cent NTSC (CIE1931) typical colour gamut
- Display size: 422x285x24.5mm
- Weight: 1.9kg without optional stand
- HDMI and USB out
- Wacom Pro Pen 2 supplied

System Requirements

PC: Windows 7 or later
Mac: OS X 10.12 or later

Rating



IN FOCUS THREE MORE TABLETS

Budget can't stretch to the Cintiq 16? Check out these alternatives

KAMVAS GT-156HD V2

Web www.huion.com

Price £450



Huion's tablet has a 15.6-inch anti-glare screen, 72 per cent NTSC colour gamut, 1,920x1,080 resolution and 8,192 levels of pressure. There's a raft of on-body controls and sliders, two chargeable styluses, and a stand.

Artisul D16

Web www.artisul.com

Price £419



Among its many features, Artisul's device has 94 per cent RGB gamut. This edges the tablet closer to Wacom Cintiq Pro territory, making it something to consider for those artists on a budget who need that wider colour gamut.

XP-Pen Artist 15.6

Web www.xp-pen.com

Price £309



The XP-Pen Artist 15.6 has a 1,920x1,080 screen and a visible angle of 170 degrees. As with most Wacom competitors it comes with a stand. The price makes it one of the cheapest entry-level creative displays on the market.

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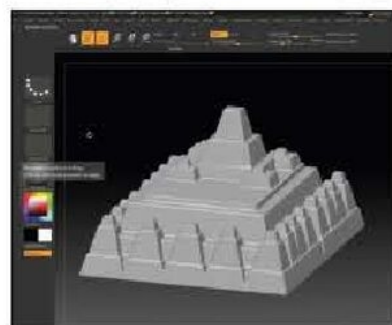
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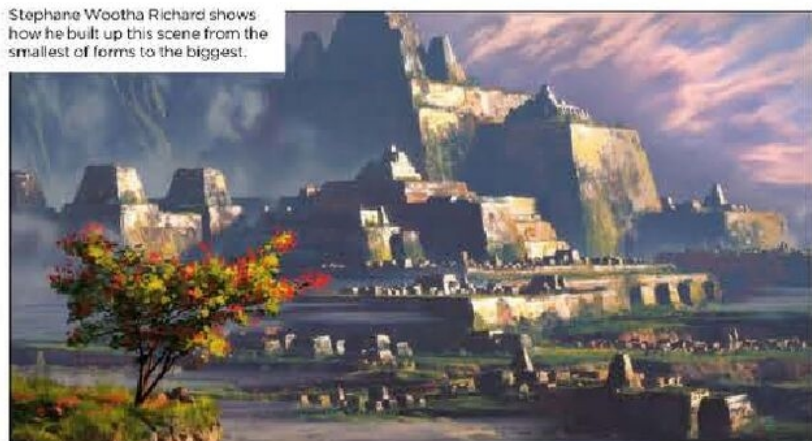


Stephane Wootha Richard shows how he built up this scene from the smallest of forms to the biggest.



Stephane is quickly able to build up a library of components that he can arrange in a variety of formations to create new structures.

As this civilisation takes shape and becomes more complex, the thumbnail render in the corner shows how the final image could look.



Advanced Kitbashing for Environment Design

BLOCK HEAD Concept artist Stephane Wootha Richard proves that all those hours you spent making things out of LEGO weren't wasted



Publisher Stephane Wootha Richard **Price** \$4 **Format** Download **Web** www.gumroad.com/wootha

Kitbashing is a slightly nerdy term for something many of us used to do as a kid (or maybe still do): using a system of components like LEGO or K'Nex to make things, and let your imagination fly.

In this video, Stephane Wootha Richard takes you through the techniques you need for a digital equivalent of those afternoons spent with bricks scattered across the floor, as he builds a fantasy environment from pieces he makes in ZBrush.

Stephane has chosen to depict a kind of mega-pyramid from an ancient civilisation with this technique, but it could equally apply to constructing a city of soaring skyscrapers or anything else you can conceive of. (An accompanying video, available separately at the same price, applies kitbashing to landscapes rather than man-made environments, although each video is a self-contained guide.)



DETAILS

Topics covered

- Initial building blocks
- Composite components
- Design considerations
- Environment and topology
- Using the render passes in Photoshop

Length
227 minutes

Rating
★★★★★

He makes the use of kitbashing to develop your own concepts much easier for you by placing an emphasis on key design principles. You'll see how the distinctive shape he gives his first building block informs every structure he creates from that foundation, for example. Later on, and thinking on a much larger scale, he shows how he relates the topology of the landscape he makes to the placement of the settlements dotted around his main structure.

Stephane has also included a second, longer video that shows how he used renders of his construction to create a painting in Photoshop. There's no narration in this second video – it's more of a bonus to enhance the main topic – but it's still useful if the idea of kitbashing is new to you. And with additional Photoshop and ZBrush files you can open up to study, he's provided a complete kit to get you started – and all for just a few bucks.

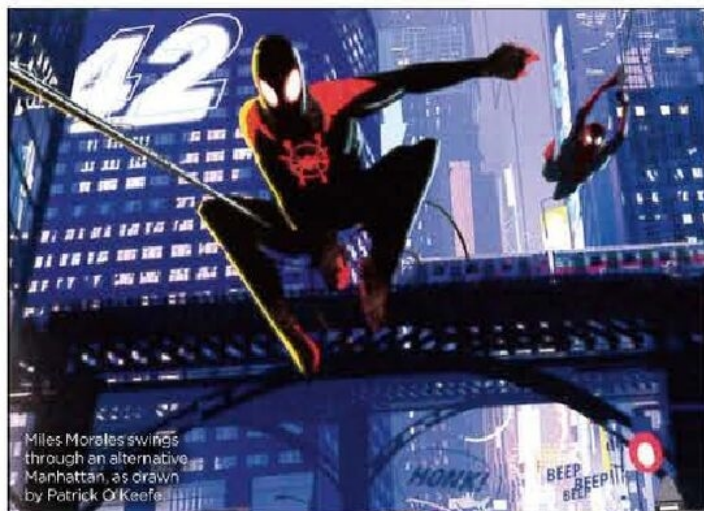
ARTIST PROFILE STEPHANE WOOTHA RICHARD

Stephane is a concept artist and illustrator for animation, video games and publishing. He's worked on various projects for companies all around the world, ranging from Legendary Digital Network to French comic book publishers Ankama and Delcourt. More recent projects include backgrounds for the animated adaptation of Castlevania on



www.wootha.com

Netflix and promotional art for Tyler Bumpus's The Swallowed World book trilogy.



Miles Morales swings through an alternative Manhattan, as drawn by Patrick O'Keefe.



Alberto Mielgo drew these early concepts of 13-year-old Miles.

Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse

UNIVERSAL APPEAL Discover how this animated boundary-pushing superhero film created a suitably experimental art style to tell its story

Author Ramin Zahed **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £30 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available Now**

Cinema-goers could be forgiven for thinking that they've seen everything a Spider-Man film could offer. Was there really anything new left to do with the character?

Then along came a Spider-Man film like no other. One that would stand out in what the film's creative team describe as our "peak superhero world" saturated by the likes of The Avengers, Captain Marvel and Deadpool. It's no exaggeration to say that Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse has pushed the limits of what a superhero film can achieve, in terms of both story and style.

With Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse - The Art of the Movie, we learn how the ground-breaking film came to be thanks to insights from the creators, including comic book writer and artist Brian Michael Bendis. A foreword from Brian even singles out the importance of art books themselves when it comes to making



these sorts of blockbusters, because they suggest how difficult it can be to nail a look. "One sketch can inspire a universe of ideas. One sketch can ruin an entire franchise."

No pressure then. Of course, Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse didn't ruin the franchise. Quite the reverse. But it did take leaps the web-slinger himself would be proud of. Leaps of style, leaps of craft, leaps of creative faith.

“The unique aesthetic that appears to break digital art conventions is explained”

Justin K Thompson's figure poses capture the mood of a slightly jaded Peter Parker.

Over the course of 10 chapters that broadly follow the narrative of the film, this art book reveals why these leaps stuck their landing. Characters are tracked from doodles through to polished designs, and the unique aesthetic that appears to break digital art conventions is explained. There's



Omar Smith created these 3D designs of Spider-Gwen, based on a concept by Shiyoon Kim.

even a suggestion as to which character could have a bigger part in future movies.

The majority of the development on display here is taken from near the end of the pipeline, but this is par for the course with film art books. Storyboards and the odd pencil drawing draft can be found in between the bulk of more refined digital mock-ups. This is a small complaint though. Especially when you see the amount of work and love for Spider-Man that has gone into making sure each shot from the film can stand alone as an illustration in its own right.

RATING ★★★★★☆



Spectrum 25: The best in contemporary fantastic art

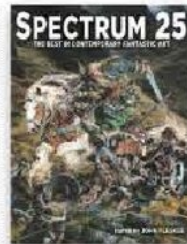
DOMINANT WAVELENGTH Take a look back on a year in imaginative art with this premier collection of leading creators in the industry



Author John Fleskes **Publisher** Flesk Publications **Price** £25 **Web** www.fleskpublications.com **Available Now**

The worlds of fantastic art have changed a lot since the first editions of **Spectrum** were printed back in 1994. In that time, **Spectrum** has been keeping its finger on the pulse of illustration, and this latest collection is no exception.

Long-time readers of **Spectrum** will know what to expect from this annual.



Detail from US artist Anna Dittmann's *I Dreamt I Could Fly*. Her illustrations have appeared in **ImagineFX** over the years.

Leading artists are gathered together for readers to pore over and learn from samples of their work. Awards are also handed out for the stand-out creators in each field. If you're an artist working in this industry, this is the book you dream of getting featured in.

In between more than 450 artworks by a range of over 260 creators, there are occasional personal stories from contributors who have scooped the gold and silver awards. These include moving accounts behind how a piece of art came to be, but what unites all of them is an appreciation for how **Spectrum** is improving the community by sharing and celebrating the amazing talent on its pages.

RATING ★★★★★



Personal art entitled *Opal*, by Chinese illustrator and game concept artist Ruoxin Zhang.

The Art and Making of Aquaman

DEEP DIVE Take the plunge and visit the imaginatively designed underwater world of DC's latest superhero film with this behind-the-scenes book

Author Mike Avila **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £35 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available Now**

With its latest film, DC had a challenge on its hands: get people to take **Aquaman** seriously.

The underwater hero has long been the punchline of the superhero world, and to its credit this making-of book doesn't shy away from the fact. In their opening statements, **Aquaman** actor Jason Momoa and director James Wan brush off the hero's lowly status as just one of the many creative



Jason Momoa's costume closely resembles that of the character's from the comic book.



obstacles that were faced by the production team.

Other hurdles included bringing to life an undersea world – something that's notoriously difficult to do on film without the environment looking weightless or unrealistic – and telling a compelling story. The film had to stay true to **Aquaman**'s extensive and knotted history, and work for modern audiences and fans alike.



Costume designer Oksana Nedavnaya's concept of Princess Mera wearing a jellyfish-inspired dress.

With the help of illustrations from the original comic book source material, plus plenty of digital concepts that track the development of costumes, creatures and locations, this book does a fine job of balancing the 'making of' with the art to reveal how the film solved these many problems and boosted **Aquaman**'s image.

RATING ★★★★★☆

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists



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The artist who's best known for her distinctive HUNGRY art series reveals why she doesn't like to plan ahead too far...

FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



Alexandra Manukyan

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Oil paint WEB: www.alexandramanukyan.com

Alexandra's work explores the theme of human connection. "The paintings examine isolated life experiences, and look for the connections to other people hidden in them," she explains.



2

1 REPLICATION TERMINUS

"Never before has the world been simultaneously so connected and disconnected. The empathy of the physical, in-person connection that defines humanity has been supplanted by a false equivocation that simulation equals understanding."



2 TO LIVE A LIFE BENEATH

"An alien world beneath dark waves, she moves with an otherworldly glow. There's something in the water... can't you see? Perhaps beyond all things that we define with certainty."

3 THROUGH THE HEART OF GRACE

"A living embodiment of elegance and fortitude, she moves with an undeniable strength alongside immaculate fluidity. How ironic that the very thing that takes our breath away is the air we breathe."





Lauren YS

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Ink, acrylic paint, spray paint WEB: www.laurenys.com

Lauren's work always has a fantastical aesthetic. "I aim to create a misfit wonderland in which imaginary heroines can address the absurdities of reality, within the confines of a page or a wall," she says.

1 SHENZHOU

"Shenzhou means divine craft in Chinese. We tend to paint space travel as a strictly American endeavour. I wanted to reimagine the image of the astronaut with an Eastern, female aesthetic."

2 SPORE RAIN

"The Mycelium Goddess embodies the reproductive process of mushrooms, as a metaphor for pollination and the spread of ideas."

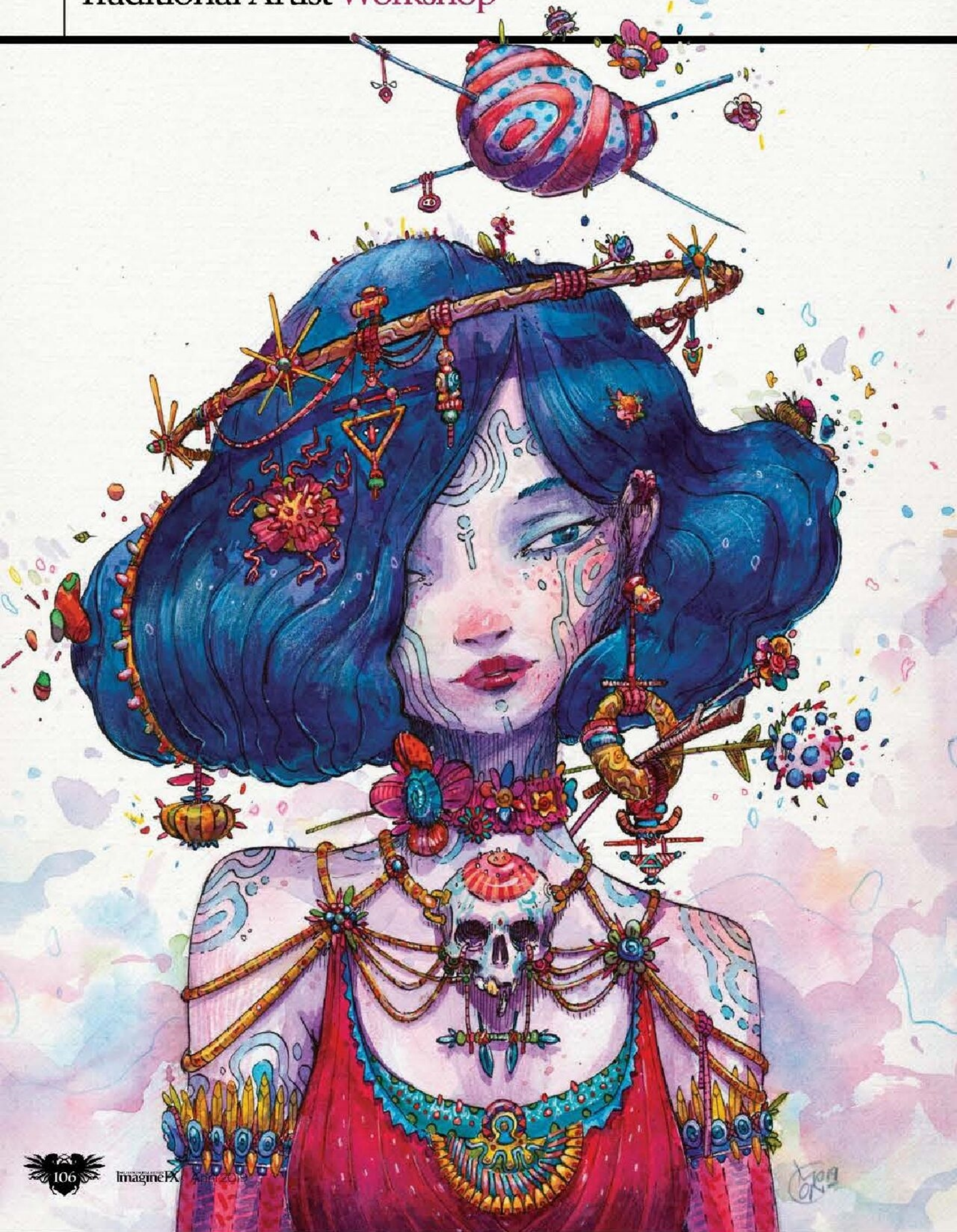
3 REEF KEEPER

"My vision of a fictional Protector of the Reef; a goddess meant to symbolise the fierce need to care for our underwater ecosystems."

4 MONA

"An imaginary sea witch with a penchant for attracting space life."





Ink

Watercolour

Gouache

Pencil

CREATE A PORTRAIT IN MIXED MEDIA

Learn how **MOON** draws on his many sources of inspiration to create a finely detailed female portrait, using a range of artistic materials

For this workshop I want to combine some of my favourite subjects to draw, including women, skulls, plant elements and body adornments. Most of my illustration work feature themes of shamanism and animism. I'm fascinated by the creativity exhibited by different cultures, such as jewellery or traditional costumes.

I take most of my inspiration from documentaries or photographs. To maintain a certain freshness in my art, I usually work without any photographic reference. I need to assimilate references and integrate them to enrich what could be called my graphic vocabulary.

Then, to build the various elements of an image, I just have to pick and combine some of them according to a graphic syntax. By this I mean layout rules, dynamism and contrasts. This syntax is very important to me and I've been able to utilise it thanks to years of experience working in the graphic design industry.

DAILY INSTAGRAM CHALLENGE

I started using mixed media to create art four years ago during my first "365 squares" project. This was a daily challenge lasting a year, where I had to create a 15x15cm square artwork using traditional media and post the results on my Instagram account (@moon_mxtr).

This challenge, which I would recommend to anyone who wants to improve their drawing skills, had three key results. First, it helped me to finish my drawings when working to a deadline. Second, I managed to improve my levels of creativity.



An overview of the tools and media that Moon used to create this female portrait.

Finally, I gained experience in working with different techniques.

So it was by experimenting that I came up with this mix of media: hot pressed watercolour paper, Indian ink, watercolour, gouache and coloured pencils. The paper isn't textured and enables me to draw with precision. Indian ink, once dry, doesn't mix with water. Watercolour has different properties when you paint on wet or dry surfaces. Gouache powder mixes well with watercolour, creating a matte surface. Finally, the

coloured pencils are useful for adding detailed lines or shades.

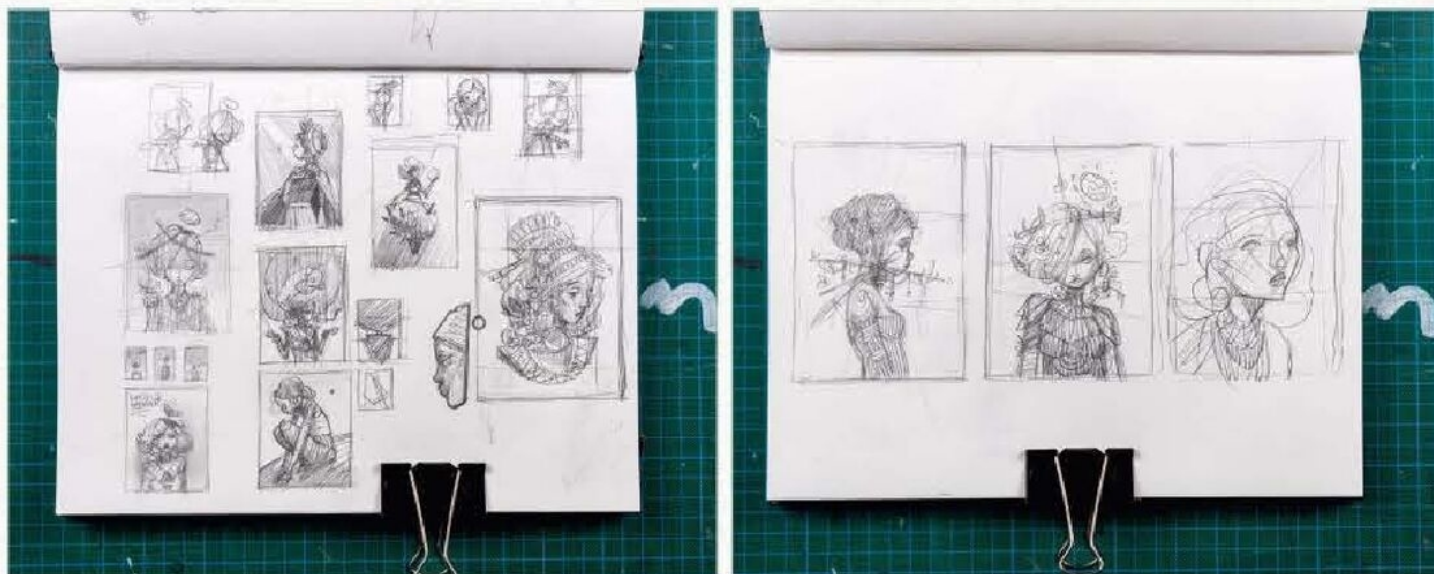
Now you know (almost) everything about my approach. But the best way for you to develop is through your own art experiments!



Moon, otherwise known as Olivier Menanteau, is a graphic designer and illustrator from France. He's worked as an art director, taught graphic design in art school and is busy developing an illustrative personal universe. You can see more of his work at www.mxtr.org.



Traditional Artist **Workshop**



1 *Initial ideas and composition*

This first step has two functions. First, to warm up and start thinking creatively. The second is to find, on a small scale, ideas of composition and what I want to achieve. I usually explore two or three ideas at a slightly larger format, before choosing one.

MATERIALS

PAPER

■ Watercolor Arches paper, hot pressed, 140lb

BRUSHES

■ Medium watercolour mop brush
■ Small watercolour Rounded brush

WATERCOLOUR PAINT

■ St Petersburg White
Nights Watercolour 36 pan set

GOUACHE PAINT

■ Lefranc & Bourgeois
Linel Artists: Lemon yellow, Titanium white, Ultramarine pink, Cerulean blue, Cadmium red

COLORED PENCILS

■ Faber-Castell Polychromos

INDIAN INK

■ Lefranc-Bourgeois

NIB

■ Atome Conté

WHITE INK PEN

■ Uni-ball Signo Angelic gel ink pen 0.7mm

MECHANICAL PENCIL

■ Graphlet 0.5 Pentel

ERASER

■ Faber-Castell kneaded erasers
■ Mono eraser pen



2 *Refining the sketch idea*

I sketch out the main lines and masses. It's important not to focus on the details at this stage. I want to find the balance between a busy drawing packed with intricate touches, and a bare-bones image. Composition can be a narrative element. It's the foundation of the illustration and so this is a crucial step.



3 *Introducing personality to the character*

Now I add the elements that give the character a personality: the face and decorative or functional objects. I don't refine these elements too much because I want the freedom to enhance them when I ink the drawing. I like to create new items at each step of the process.



4 *It's time to lighten the sketch*

I roll a kneaded eraser over the drawing, which ensures that the sketch doesn't interfere with my inking stage. The eraser will remove the top layer of graphite and thus lighten the lines, without eliminating them. I like to keep my sketch lines in place until I finish my piece. ➡



5 Inking my sketch lines and reinforcing focal areas

I use a soft calligraphy nib to apply the Indian ink. It enables me to work precisely, and with a little more pressure I can achieve variations in the line widths. This technique is useful for reinforcing the lines on important or foreground elements. Even if most of the shadows will be done in watercolour, I use some hatching to mark out some areas a little more.



6 Deciding on a colour scheme

I'll usually generate some possible colours schemes on a separate piece of paper. They help me to get into the colour mind-set after the previous black and white steps. It's a pretty random process and definitive choices aren't made. It's more of a general guide for me, really.



7 Laying down the dominant colours

I start by blocking out the main colours on the largest parts of the drawing. To fill these parts I use several hues of the same colour and a lot of water, to generate interesting shapes and textures. I use a big brush when I need a lot of water and a thinnest one for the tricky parts.

8 Filling in the rest of the colours

I add colour to all parts of the drawing, much like working with a child's colouring book. It helps me to maintain consistency between multiple instances of the same colour. The Indian ink lines act like a barrier between different colours.



9 Add a second watercolour layer

I wait until all the colours are dry before bringing in details, nuances and shades of colour in certain areas. I create patterns on the clothing and marks on the character's skin. The idea is to add details at each stage, using the different mediums. ➤➤





10 *Enhancing the figure through the use of shadows*

Now that the drawing is filled with colour, I can see that things are looking rather flat. The solution is to add shadows with shades of purple and blue – never with black. Purple and blue brings subtle nuances, whereas black can make things look dirty.



11 *Creating a sense of lighting through the application of gouache*

I use gouache to create lighter areas and accentuate the contrasts and therefore the volume of the different elements. Because of its matt aspect, gouache coexists very well with watercolour. I can vary the gouache's lighting effect by adjusting the level of dilution.



12 Starting on the background

I want to have an abstract, soft background to contrast with the character and her strong colours. I start by randomly wetting the bottom of the paper, avoiding touching the character. Then I apply a few touches of colours, which subtly mix with each other.



13 Refining the background

I let the first layer dry, then add another light layer of colours. To generate a sense of depth, I reduce the amount of water that I use to wet the paper. I'm keen to use more defined brush strokes with each refinement of the background.



14 Time to break out the coloured pencils

Coloured pencils can be useful for accentuating certain parts of an image. I apply a layer of light colours in the hair and some darker areas of the face. It brings another texture that the other mediums can't match. I also use the pencils to add some abstract lines in the background or for depicting little floating elements.



15 Adding the final touches with white ink

I love adding hard lights with pure white ink, and use a white ink pen on some elements. It's crucial not to overdo this step, because there's a danger that you can flatten the drawing – the exact opposite of the intended effect! ■

First Impressions

✧ Ashiya Kisa ✧

The artist known for her HUNGRY series reveals why she doesn't plan ahead



What was your first paid commission?
It was a set of illustrations for a novel. This was about

seven years ago. I don't want to reveal any details about the novel, but the theme was super weird for me. I couldn't afford to get too picky, though, since it was my first commissioned work. I remember being quite excited about it.

What's the last piece that you finished, and how do the two artworks differ?

The last piece I drew is a new work for my HUNGRY series. They differ completely. First, my style and skill level have changed over the years. Second, the commissioned works were black and white digital illustrations with a theme that's in complete contrast to what I like to draw, and with a lot of interventions to my work and style.

Now, of course, it's my own work, I use traditional media and it's in full colour. And of course, there's no one telling me how I have to draw



YOKAI

"This was done for the MYTHBOOK 3 artbook, portraying a yokai girl chasing the main masked character."

HUNGRY #01

"This is the very first artwork I did for my HUNGRY series. It means a lot to me."



look like me, so probably any image of mine? I draw things I love and get my inspiration from my own life and experience, so I can pretty much relate to any of my works.

Can you describe the place where you usually create your art?

It's at my super-large desk where I have anything I need placed within easy reach. I usually watch TV series during drawing sessions, since they won't distract me like music and I hate working in silence. I have two monitors so I can watch something and work digitally or edit videos. Okay, I mostly listen than watch, but it's still better than music, which just makes me sing and dance!

Do you have an art tool or ritual that you can't live without?

Watercolour paint. It would be weird to do watercolour paintings without it! Also as I said, I need something to watch. Sometimes choosing what to watch is hard and it stops me from starting to draw. Another thing that's important for me – and I'm trying hard to overcome this – is that I can't draw outside my home.

Is making a living as an artist all you thought it would be?

Initially, I studied design and wanted to work in illustration, so... yes? But I didn't expect to be an actual freelance illustrator. I thought it would be more studio-based.

What does the future hold for you?

I don't like thinking about future events, because they never happen as I had initially envisaged them and it makes me feel uncomfortable and pointless. And my own decisions can change quickly. But I'll give myself some goals for the year, to ensure that I stay productive and create all the things that I want to create.

Ashiya is a freelance illustrator who mostly works in watercolours. She loves drawing slice-of-life illustrations with girls, cats and a lot of fun details. You can see her art at www.instagram.com/ashiyaart.

something and the theme is one that I enjoy drawing.

Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?

I don't think the place I grew up in influenced my work in any way. The thing that influenced me is mostly anime, which I've watched a lot since I was little. My style has moved on from anime, but in the beginning it was super anime-like.

What character or scene that you've painted do you most identify with?
People always tell me I draw myself, and all characters I draw kind of

“TV is better than music, which just makes me sing and dance”

FREE ARTBOOK

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